CONTEMPORARY

art

PHILIPPINES

JOSE TENCE RUIZ'S 'MITING DE ATRAZO'. COURTESY OF FINALE ART FILE.

100 YEARS OF SOCIAL REALISM
THE CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF **VICENTE MANANSALA**

BENCAB'S ICONIC MUSE
SABEL'S MANY FACES PAINT A PORTRAIT OF THE NATION

AVANT-GARDE ART INSIDE THE **ROBERTO CHABET** ARCHIVE

ECCENTRIC GENIUS

THE ART PERSONALITIES OF **JOSE TENCE RUIZ**

SCULPTING THE SACRED FEMININE
AGNES ARELLANO'S TRIBUTE TO THE FEMALE BODY

SPOTLIGHT ON THE ELECTIONS
GROUP SHOWS TACKLE HOPE, DESPAIR AND THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

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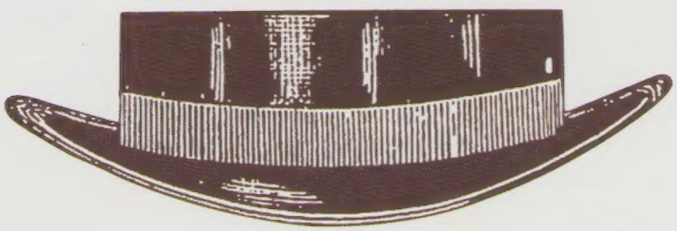

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The Depths of Philippine Art

The history of Philippine art is as expansive and deep as the ocean—there are lulls and breaks, moments of peaceful tranquility followed by the brilliant roar of waves. Peering into its glassy surface, a world takes shape: light fades to dark, life takes on new forms and movements, subdued hues turn vibrant when kissed by the sun. Everything has a relationship and an influence, a summoning force that propels even the tiniest organism.

For our 10th issue, we explore the depths of Philippine art through its icons and masterworks. What forms and movements have shaped Philippine art today? What life thrives beneath its glassy surface?

Examining past, present and future directions, we retrace how our past colonial histories—Spanish, American, Japanese, European—are deeply mired into our consciousness and have shaped who we are as a nation and an artistic canon. Of these diverse influences, Filipino artists create works that impart a strong sense of identity, as Purita Kalaw-Ledesma once said, "…something that we Filipinos can recognize truly as our own."

Along these lines, we present a rich collection of features that honor the masters and icons that bear great influences on Philippine art. Noted art critic Cid V. Reyes gives us an intimate look into the life of National Artist Vicente Manansala, whose centennial anniversary this year is marked by a number of tribute exhibits in Metro Manila, which pay respect to his admired legacy and contributions to Social Realism (p. 56).

No muse has been as much of an influence as National Artist BenCab's enchanting Sabel. Rene Guatlo tells us the real story of Sabel not evident in BenCab's most memorable paintings—her personal life, what situations influenced her choices—the woman behind the icon of poverty that she has come to represent (p. 50).

Jewel Chuaunsu takes us on a tour of the Jorge B. Vargas Museum, how it has transformed from a private collection into a powerful institution engaged in educating the masses about the historical conditions that influence Philippine art (p. 44). Chuaunsu also tackles the elections with a sharp analysis of recent group shows that reflect upon the signs of the times (p. 17).

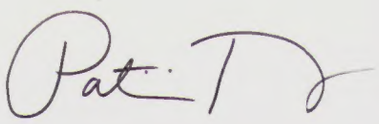
Antares Gomez Bartolome sits down for a cup of coffee with Jose Tence Ruiz—one of the Cultural Center of the Philippines' Thirteen Artists—who shares colorful anecdotes about his varied art interests, relentless work ethic and commitment to art for the community (p. 62).

One of the remarkable fathers of the avant-garde art movement in the Philippines, Roberto Chabet is best known for his experimental, conceptual masterpieces that question fixed notions about art and modernity. Ringo Bunoan reveals Chabet's process and personal history from her perspective as a researcher of The Roberto Chabet Archive (p. 68).

As one of Chabet's disciples and a fine master in her own right, sculptor Agnes Arellano deconstructs the subject of womanhood, peeling back its multiple layers and meanings through her own body, which bears the imprint of the sacred feminine and Filipino indigenous mythology (p. 72).

Closing the issue, Patrick D. Flores curates our White Wall section, recapping the entries for this year's Philippine Art Awards, which represent the four regions—Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao—in a stunning collection of new, innovative works by Filipino artists from all over the country (p. 87).

Thank you to the hardworking editorial team and the fine roster of contributors who have helped put together this keepsake issue. To our valued readers, we hope you enjoy exploring the depths of Philippine art as much as we have. Happy reading!



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contributors

Cid Reyes, who profiles National Artist Vicente Manansala for this issue, is an artist-critic with a substantial body of works in both fields. Reyes authored *Conversations on Philippine Art* and has written books on three National Artists—Arturo Luz, J. Elizalde Navarro and BenCab (co-authored with Krip Yuson). He co-authored *Herencia: The BPI Art Collection* and *Tanaw: The Central Bank Art Collection* and received a Best in Art Criticism Award from the Art Association of the Philippines (AAP). Reyes is currently at work on a book about National Artist Napoleon Abueva.

Reuben Ramas Cañete, who introduces us to the art collection of Nestor and Adelaida Gaddi (Featured Collector), is currently Associate Professor at the Department of Art Studies, UP Diliman. He received a BFA in Painting from the University of Santo Tomas and an MA in Art History and a Ph.D. in Philippine Studies from UP Diliman. A writer, art historian, teacher and independent curator, Dr. Cañete has contributed to many local and international publications and authored books on the field of Philippine art and culture.

Antares Gomez Bartolome, who explores the fascinating life of multi-media artist Jose Tence Ruiz, has a BFA in Art History from UP Diliman. He teaches art history and theory courses at Philippine Women's University, but is paid very little and so has to take the odd writing job from time to time. Antares would rather be at home cooking.

Ringo Bunoan is a multi-media artist who has participated in numerous exhibitions in Manila and abroad. From 1999-2004, she led the independent art space Big Sky Mind, which played an active role in supporting young artists. In 2003, she was named as one of the Thirteen Artists by the CCP. After three years in Kathmandu, she returned to Manila in 2007 as the Philippine Researcher for the Asia Art Archive (AAA) in Hong Kong. Last year, she initiated The Chabet Archive for AAA and the Lopez Memorial Museum, which she writes about in this issue.

Stan Ong started dabbling in photography in 2000, first using film cameras and eventually shifting to digital photography. His hobby soon became a full-fledged passion and he has diversified his portfolio (www.flickr.com/photos/stanong) to include travel, food, glamour, events and children's photography (www.thestorkstudio.com). Stan captures the Vargas Museum and Jose Tence Ruiz for this issue.

Patrick D. Flores, who curates our White Wall section in this issue, is Professor of Art Studies at the Department of Art Studies at the University of the Philippines and Adjunct Curator at the National Art Gallery, Singapore. He is Curator of the Vargas Museum in Manila. He was one of the curators of *Under Construction: New Dimensions in Asian Art* in 2000 and the Gwangju Biennale in 2008. He was a Visiting Fellow at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. in 1999 and an Asian Public Intellectuals Fellow in 2004. Among his publications are *Painting History: Revisions in Philippine Colonial Art* (1999); *Remarkable Collection: Art, History, and the National Museum* (2006); and *Past Peripheral: Curation in Southeast Asia* (2008).

Abby Yao, who acquaints us with the Spanish masters and the *El Prado Project* at the Ayala Museum, received her Communication degree from Ateneo de Manila University and her joint MA in the same subject from the University of London Institute of Education and Roskilde University (Denmark). She is an exhibiting painter and freelance writer.

Meds Medina is a freelance photographer who enjoys doing landscape and street photography. She is having a blast looking at the world through the lens of a camera and gets exhilarated whenever a photograph is the realization of a vision, such as with Agnes Arellano, whom she photographed for this issue.

A product of the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts, **Abby Frias** took up graphic design courses in Auckland, New Zealand. She first started in advertising then decided in 2004 to pursue a career in photography. She has done commercial and editorial photography for several publications. Being an avid traveler, she particularly loves shooting food, people and architecture. She captures the art and home of Nestor and Adelaida Gaddi (Featured Collector).

Rene E. Guatlo, who explores BenCab's iconic Sabel, is a feature writer for various magazines and broadsheets. He is also a Japanese language translator and interpreter. Based in Ilocos Norte, he is rediscovering various aspects of Ilocano culture while promoting his home province.

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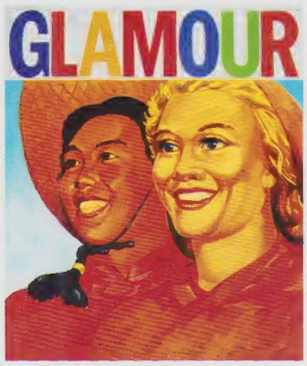
in this issue

17 Gallery

22 Call of The Muse
Bellarocca Island Resort and Spa hosts 10 artists for a weekend of inspiration on the breathtaking shores of Marinduque. The result? A first-rate show at The Peninsula Manila Hotel that revels in the splendor of this magnificent island.

Getting ready for the Bellarocca art exhibit.

35 Art@Beijing
China's most celebrated artists, galleries and collectors converge with a global audience at Art Beijing Contemporary Art Fair 2010, the country's most diverse art event to date.
BY PATRICIA RECTO TUMANG



Igor Baskakov's *Glamor*, featured in Art Beijing.

44-83 Features

44 Collective Memory
With its commitment to learning, the Jorge B. Vargas Museum preserves memories and educates a young generation about the true value of Filipino history and art.
BY JEWEL CHUAUNSU

50 Sabel: BenCab's Iconic Muse
Known for her somber and multifarious disposition, BenCab's iconic muse marks a turning point in the artist's fastidious career and captures a new legion of fans.
BY RENE E.GUATLO

BenCab's *Portrait of Sabel*.

Vicente Manansala's *Candle Vendor*.

56 Slums and Altars
A string of exhibits in 2010 pays tribute to Vicente Manansala's centennial anniversary. CID V. REYES brings us closer to unraveling the mystery behind the National Artist's rich life and his profound influences.

62 Artistic Idiosyncrasy
Drawing from a diverse array of sources and inspirations, Jose Tence Ruiz tackles politics, personal practice and curation with sweet determination and artistic panache.
BY ANTARES GOMEZ BARTOLOME

Jose Tence Ruiz's *Mademoiselle Bec Sucre*.

68 Quiet Poetry
With exuberant masterpieces that offer meditations on space, displacement and allegorical meaning, Roberto Chabet's clever take on modernity represents a conceptual direction in contemporary art.
BY RINGO BUNOAN

72 The Sacred Feminine
Her penchant for scale makes Agnes Arellano a force to contend with. Her grand sculptures reinterpret the sacred feminine and are doorways into worlds of fantasy, frolic and alternate states of being.
BY PATRICIA RECTO TUMANG

Detail of Agnes Arellano's *Carcass-Cornucopia*.

78 Art in Ordinary Spaces
Serendipity plays a keen role in shaping the formidable collection of Nestor and Adelaida Gaddi—with over 130 works by Filipino and American artists, the Gaddis have amassed an impressive roster of contemporary masterworks that they hope to share with the public. BY REUBEN RAMAS CAÑETE

87-95 White Wall

85 Philippine Art Awards Preview
Though entries from the four regions—Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao—represent varied sensibilities and diverse expressions in this year's Philippine Art Awards, on a whole, they reinforce the archipelago's position as a strong breeding ground for artistic talent and innovation.
BY PATRICK D. FLORES AND CID REYES

Entry from Luzon artist Rommel Sampana.

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April 13 to June 30, 2010
Full Circle: Creativity Moving Through Generations
Group exhibition
Yuchengco Museum

Full Circle brings together five families of Tsinoy artists and designers—Anita Magsaysay Ho, Doris Ho, Robert Alexander Ho, Betty Cobonpue, Kenneth Cobonpue, Salvacion Lim Higgins, Mark Lewis Higgins, Agustin Goy, Anna Mari Goy, Abi Goy, Cesare Syjuco, Jean Marie Syjuco and daughters Michelline, Beatrix and Maxine.

Yuchengco Museum is located at the RCBC Plaza, corner of Ayala and Sen. Gil Puyat Avenues, Makati City. For inquiries, please call (+632) 889-1234 or visit www.yuchengcomuseum.org.

April 23 to August 8, 2010
Traces
Old and recent works of Imelda Cajipe Endaya
3/F South Wing Gallery, U.P. Vargas Museum

Cajipe Endaya's series of lithographs, chine colle and monoprints converse with archival materials and artworks from the Vargas Musuem collection.

The Vargas Museum is located at Roxas Avenue, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City. For inquiries, please call (+632) 928-1927 or visit www.vargasmuseum.org.

May 5 to 16, 2010
Different Strokes
Two-man exhibit by Maia Magpantay and Jose Mata
Artes Orientes

The two artists showcase their respective painting form and style. Magpantay is quite adept at using her palette knife while Mata's style is pointillism.

Artes Orientes is located at the 2nd Level, The Retail Shops at Serendra, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig. For inquiries, please call (+632) 856-9047.

May 7 to June 19, 2010
Cartographic Skits: Mapping Phenomena in Three Movements
Paintings, sculptures and installations by Alexander de Moscoso
Kulay-Diwa Gallery of Philippine Contemporary Art

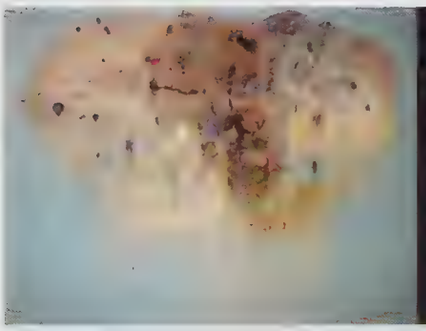
The works are concrete attempts at capturing the energy that drives the nature of phenomena. The artist aims to assemble experiential representations of the real and imagined.

Kulay-Diwa is located at 25 Lopez Avenue, Lopez Village, Sucat 1700, Parañaque City. For inquiries, please call (+632) 826-0574 or visit www.kulay-diwa.com.

May 8 to 23, 2010
Counterpoise
Sculptural works by Daniel dela Cruz
Art Verite'

Dela Cruz's figures of women are of several categories: soft, beautiful women clothed in lacy gowns or frocks, pregnant women with fully formed infants within their transparent bellies, and athletic women who strike dynamic poses.

Art Verite' is located at Unit 2C-05, 2/F Shops at Serendra Bonifacio Global City, Taguig. For inquiries, please call (+632) 915-1982.



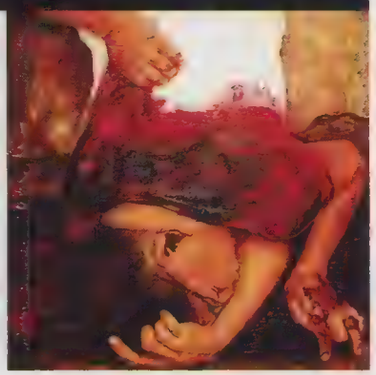
May 10 to July 30, 2010
Flow
Mixed media works by Demosthenes Campos
Masterpiece Gallery

Puddles, droplets and streams of water inspired *Flow*. Campos used these as take-off points for his abstraction—graphite squiggles, silvery foils, splashes of stain and blobs of texture.

Masterpiece Gallery is located at the Lobby Level, Trinoma Mall. For inquiries, please call (+632) 915-2846.

May 14 to June 4, 2010
Babylon Zoo: Inquisition Symphony
Paintings by Tyago Almario, CJ Tañedo and Ramel Villas
Blanc Compound

The artists vividly capture the lingering entity of hatred—the cataclysmic tendencies of man, inhumane acts of faith and torture contraptions.

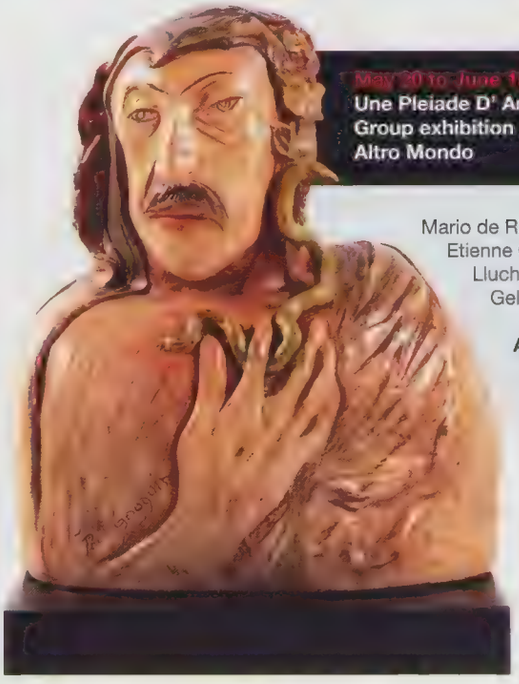


Blanc Compound is located at 359 Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City. For inquiries, please call (+63920) 927-6436 or email info@blanc.ph.

May 16 to June 4, 2010
Departure Areas
Exhibition by Jason Moss
Tala Gallery

Moss is an artist, cartoonist, film animator and illustrator. His latest show features 12 acrylic on canvas works.

Tala Gallery is located at 100 Scout De Guia St., Kamuning, Quezon City. For inquiries, please call (+632) 441-1267.



May 20 to June 15, 2010
Une Pleiade D' Artistes
Group exhibition
Altro Mondo

Recent works by Gabby Barredo, Fernando Modesto, Norberto Carating, Justin Nuyda, Roberto Feleo, Ramon Orlina, RM de Leon, Mario de Rivera, Romulo Galicano, Eghai Roxas, Etienne Gros, Francisco Sepulveda, Julie Lluch. Nestor Olarte Vinluan and Ofelia Gelvezon Tequi.

Altro Mondo is located at the Third Level, Greenbelt 5. For inquiries, please call (+63939) 909-4099.

July 2 to July 15, 2010
Cloud Cucooland
Exhibition by Marcel Antonio
Galleria Quattrocento

The characters in Antonio's figurative works are his fictive inventions. They come from all over the world with its multifarious cultures and are likewise from literature, folktales and mythology.

Galleria Quattrocento is located at the 3rd floor, Art Space, Glorietta 4. For inquiries, please call (+632) 818-5939.

May 22 to June 13, 2010
Faith and Reason
Group exhibition
Manila Contemporary

The exhibit covers the spectrum of religious iconography with works from Southeast Asian artists Ahmad Zakii Anwar, Filippo Sciascia, Pintor Sirait, Manit Sriwanichpoom, Sri Astari, Jason Wee, and Made Wijaya, together with Filipino artists Yason Banal, Andres Barrioquinto, Frankie Callaghan, Valeria Cavestany, Roberto Chabet, Mariano Ching, Imelda Cajipe Endaya, Kiko Escora, Patty Eustaquio, Maya Muñoz, Leeroy New, Mark Salvatus, Popo San Pascual, Gerry Tan and Trek Valdizno.

Manila Contemporary is located at Whitespace, 2314 Pasong Tamo Extension, Brgy. Magallanes, Makati City. For inquiries please call (+632) 844-7328 or email s.perez@manilacontemporary.com.

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ManilaART 2010 Promises to be the Biggest Art Event in Philippine History

Celebrating Philippine Art

After the astounding success of last year's MANILART 09, the Bonafide Art Galleries Organization (BAGO), teams up once more with the National Commission on Culture and Arts (NCCA) to showcase the finest in Philippine Visual Arts via the bigger and better MANILART 10 - 2nd Philippine International Art Fair.

Slated for a four-day public run at the SMX Convention Center from July 30 until August 1, 2010, MANILART 2010 will kick-off with an exclusive "by-invitation-only" preview on July 29.

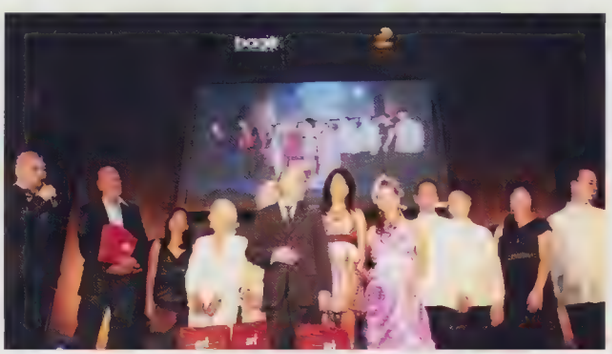
MANILART 10 promises to dazzle art lovers and enthusiasts with the best and broadest examples of Philippine contemporary art. Over 1,000 paintings and sculptures are to be displayed, gathering works by some 400 of the country's brightest talents, thus making the fair the biggest ever in Philippine history.

"When we first announced MANILART last year, it took us three long months to fill up the 40 exhibition booths we had planned. This year, 60 of the booths were snapped up within two days by some of the most prestigious galleries nationwide," says BAGO president Jonathan Sy, "surely we've done something right to be experiencing this surge in demand."

In fact, MANILART 09 was in itself a milestone event. A staggering total of 5,000 visitors braved the strong winds and rains to enjoy and view the art fair last July. This astonishing feat is something BAGO plans to surpass with the staging of MANILART 10.

"This year, we expect to triple the total number of visitors due to more media attention and the exponentially growing interest in Philippine art. We also have more exciting activities such as painting demonstrations, on-the-spot competitions, "how-to" lectures and many more. That is why we are very pleased that the NCCA Committee on Art Galleries headed by Lyn Yusi initiated the approval of a larger grant for this project. We are likewise thankful that the management of the SMX Convention Center agreed to lease their Hall 4 at a subsidized rate owing to their belief in supporting the arts. Not only can SMX accommodate a bigger exhibition space but more importantly, it is the only venue that is truly world-class—a perfect match for MANILART," Sy adds.

While some sectors are still reeling from the devastation of last year's strong typhoons and the economy has yet to recover from the effects of global recession, it is a consolation to know that the visual arts is not only alive but actually thriving. This manifests the Filipino's spirit of resilience and pride in his own culture, admirable traits highlighted in the canvasses and brushstrokes of the many contemporary artworks on display in MANILART 10.



LOOKING FORWARD. (AT RIGHT) The preview gala night of last year's ManilArt. (TOP) Andres Barrioquinto's *Crystal Gazer* is the representative artwork of ManilArt10.

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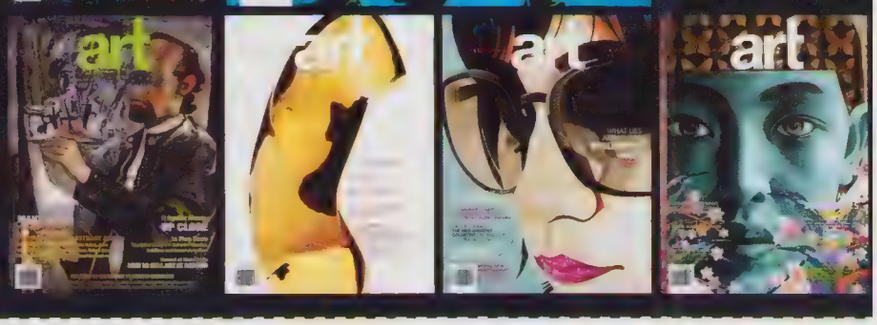

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gallery

news, reviews and guides to select previous shows and upcoming events

In every election, we hope that the people we elect to positions of power will work towards the good of the country and make a positive difference in our everyday lives. This clamor for change is even more apparent in this year's elections. The Philippines is at a crossroads with corruption-tainted politics. In the weeks leading up to the May 2010 elections, various artists collaborated on group shows intended to critique our national progress, read the signs of the times and inspire us to be the change we want to see in our country.

signos

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Group shows on the elections incite a dialogue about national progress

BY JEWEL CHUAUNSU

TIME FOR CHANGE. A number of politically themed shows, including *Signos*, was launched during the run-up to the May 2010 elections.

Eternal Damn Nation at Manila Contemporary

Eternal Damn Nation is Cavite-based art group Anting-Anting's last leg of their three-part exhibition of Heaven, Earth and Hell. The group consists of Wilfredo Alicdan, Julio Austria, Lawrence Borsoto, Alfredo Esquillo, Jr., Emmanuel Garibay, Dei Jardiniano, Joseph Lofranco, Rosario Sanchez, Chriseo Sipat, Christian Tamondong and Clairelynn Uy.

From *Salvation History* (Tin-Aw, 2009) in which they projected desires of Utopia to *Saving the Land* (arteXchange, 2010) where they tackled the concerns of today's world, Anting-Anting's *Eternal Damn Nation* coincided with the 2010 elections. In the masquerade of popular jingles, solipsistic debates and black propaganda, hell is not knowing where the country's new leaders will direct the course of history.

Grim as the themes might be, they do not necessarily point to the end of the world. Instead they speak of the suffering present in our locus. The works are mostly directly referent, with portraits of national leaders and heroes. The artists work with obvious metaphors in order to drive straight into the heart of power relationships inherent in electoral politics.

A collaborative mural from the group illustrates their vision of hell. Amidst dead spirits and ghouls are images of corruption (a crocodile in human guise holding a smiling President Arroyo), fallen ideals (a dead Jose Rizal with a bullet hole in his head, the Rizal monument being knocked down, a pedophile priest) and secularization (Jesus dressed like a yuppie, a Christ-like Manny Pacquiao). But the pierced body of Christ and the Sacred Heart almost comes across as the promise of redemption.

Alfred Esquillo Jr.'s *Pangakong Napako* is derived from images of the early years of American colonization. There are three figures, one, a white American woman being carried on a portable platform, and two local males conveying her along the rugged mountain path. The strip attached to the carrying-board is bound around the men's foreheads, the weight making them cower like beasts of burden. Esquillo Jr. substituted the men's legs with their mirror images, pierced by a large nail—a visual pun on *pangakong napako* (unfulfilled promises). As long as the real power remains concentrated in the hands of the few elites, the masses languish in poverty.

Hell-bent on questioning why the nation is burning in fires tended by itself, Anting-Anting continues to stress for a collective solution that will put an end to chaos.

PROMISES UNFULFILLED. (ABOVE) Alfredo Esquillo Jr.'s *Pangakong Napako*, 2010, 48 x 48 inches, oil on rubber. (TOP) Anting-Anting's *Eternal Damn Nation*, 2010, 108 x 180 inches, oil on canvas.

IMAGES COURTESY OF MANILA CONTEMPORARY

Signos at Art Center

Elections are deemed as an exercise in a conflux of signs and signifiers, wherein we gesture democracy through a process of campaigns, equal opportunity and symbols of the individual's power to decide. It is both a gamble and a game: to take hold of these names and numbers and be able to place them in positions and domains. *SIGNOS: Signs, Streams and Signals* signifies portents and omens: images and manifestations of what is to come as one may imagine through symbols of specific constructs.

Galerie Anna co-presented with slash/art artists' initiatives the group exhibit featuring new works in various media by Con Cabrera, Buen Calubayan, Joey Cobcobo, Marika B. Constantino, Don Djerassi Dalmacio, Karen Ocampo Flores, Lotsu Manes, Emil Mercado, J. Pacena II, Mervin Pimentel, Christina Quisumbing Ramilo, Iggy Rodriguez, Kirby Roxas, Don M. Salubayba, Mark Salvatus, Art Sanchez, Mimi Tecson, Teta Tulay, Wesley Valenzuela and Kalye Collective (Dennis Atienza, Robert Besana, Alvin Cristobal, Alfredo Esquillo, Kirby Roxas and Archie Ruga).

In Emil Mercado's *Shades of Democracy*, a stream of ballots overflows from a school desk in disarray. The official ballots belong to South Upi, Maguindanao, in reference to the Maguidanao Massacre last November 23—the Philippines' worst case of election-related violence, with a death toll of 57 people. Until now, the victims of the massacre have yet to be given justice. There is a small video screen that flashes images of smiling presidential candidates, juxtaposed with the sound of a barking dog and images of the masses just getting by with their daily lives.

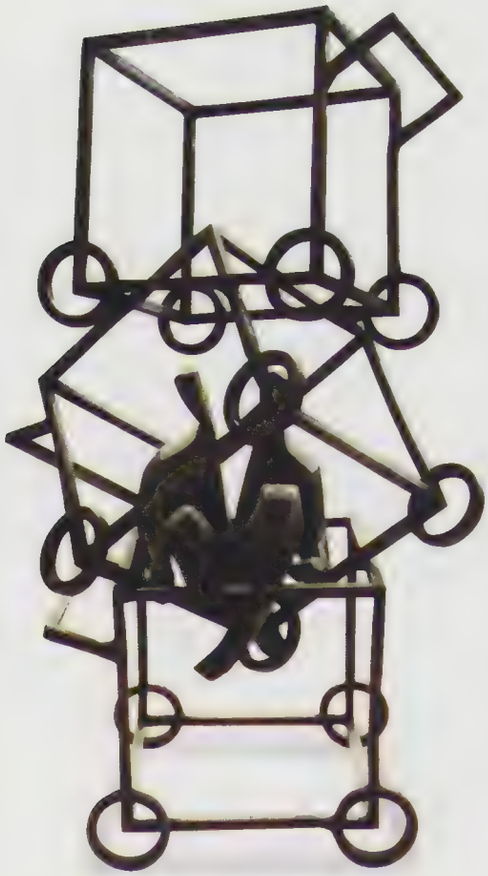
Political platforms are the subject of Joey Cobcobo's *Platoporma*. His woodcut illustrations represent ten promises that were made by candidates while they were campaigning—promises to end poverty, pay our debt, and provide free education, pledges that they will not lie or steal. The humorous and tongue-in-cheek illustrations poke fun at the candidates' slogans. For instance, Cobcobo presents a scene at a girly bar with the text: *Gusto ko* happy *ka*" ("I want you to be happy."). Meanwhile, spider webs are used as a metaphor for free housing because, according to Cobcobo, the only thing free is the house of spiders. The platforms, when combined together, seem to ring hollow and are meant more to please people and win votes.

Teta Tulay's *Under Duress* is quietly disturbing. A *bayong* (native bag), with holes cut out for the eyes, hangs from the ceiling. The symbolic object refers to the Makapili, a militant Filipino group that turned over Filipino guerillas to the Japanese during World War II. With a *bayong* covering their faces, they pointed out insurgents to the Japanese. Underneath the

SLIPPING OFF THE MASK. (LEFT TO RIGHT) Teta Tulay's *Under Duress*; Detail of Kalye Collective's *Diagnosis*, 2010, mixed wood panel, coconut shell, small drawings. (BELOW) Mervin Pimentel's *Unmask*, 2010, oil on canvas.

bayong are photos of unknown people, their eyes crossed out with black electrical tape. Common items—a pail of water, empty bottle of Cobra energy drink, spoons, used candle, used cigarettes, lighter, masking tape, plastic bag, ruler, plastic wire, hooks and a newspaper that bears the words "Break Free"—are placed on top of the photos. Overall, one can feel from this installation an air of secrecy and the shadow of torture.

Diagnosis by Kalye Collective borrows from the *albularyo's* (folk healer) practice of *tawas ng kandila*. The albularyo takes a new candle, lights it, and lets it drip over a bowl of water. He sees an image in the wax drippings and interprets it, diagnosing the supernatural illness that is causing the patient's aches and pains. The six images Kalye Collective reads in their diagnoses—a televangelist, an "I love New York" logo, a king chess piece, a child, the world in the palm of God's hand, a chain of flaming hearts, a thumb print—are searching for a remedy, not the root cause, of society's ills. Who or what will save us? Is it El Shaddai's miracle touch, an alliance with the U.S., our newly elected President, the future generation, God's grace or the power of democracy? It depends on what one believes in.



Everyday Filipino Heroes at the Vargas Museum

The Center for Art, New Ventures and Sustainable Development (CANVAS), in cooperation with the Vargas Museum, and with support from the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), launched two major exhibitions—*Everyday Filipino Heroes* and *Dekalogo*—that serve as artistic contributions to the goal of promoting meaningful elections.

For the first exhibition, 65 senior and emerging artists produced works that answered the question: Who is the hero within? Heroes are not the icons exalted by media and history, but rather ordinary Filipinos—parents, teachers, farmers, fisherfolk, street vendors, overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and many more—who perform quiet acts of heroism in their daily struggle to live in dire times and make the world better for themselves and others.

We are the heroes we are looking for amid the messiahs of false hopes and promises. Daily life is a site of valor and being heroic is not an event or spectacle, only an intimate moment of making sure the collective good prevails through a local, moral world, a personal universe of fine deeds.

Ang Paghahati ng Oras ni Efren, a brass sculpture by Juan Sajid Imao, was inspired by the story of CNN Hero of the Year Efren Peñaflorida who was torn between his obligations to his family and his lifelong mission to bring literacy to poor kids through his "pushcart classroom". His sheer determination to succeed is innate in every Filipino.

Benedicto "BenCab" Cabrera pays tribute to the nameless workers who build our infrastructure and support our economy. Renato Barja tackles the same subject, but in contrast to BenCab's colorful workers, Barja's *Minimum Wage Earner* is somber and gray. His solitary construction worker is taking a break. But, looking at his tired eyes and grim face, it's clear there is no rest for the weary. They are examples of hard-working and resilient Filipinos who persevere despite a life of hard labor.

Some of the artists honored mothers through their artworks. Aris Bagtas paints a cheery portrait of a mother and child. The mother wears a sun-dappled veil, symbolizing that she is the light of the home. Queti Azurin uses an unusual medium—sawdust on wood—to create an image of a mother playing with her children on a swing. Cathy Lasam's acrylic on folded paper artwork highlights a mother's beauty and grace.

In a nod to the elections, Buen Calubayan created *Pinger*, a digital print on tarpaulin, which could either stand for

PHOTOS BY JEWEL CHUANSU

the index finger print that identifies voters when they cast their ballots or the proverbial middle finger. The artist asks, "*Ako ang simula ng pagbabago o panggagago?*" ("Am I the catalyst for change or deception?") The destiny of our country lies in us. Time will tell if we have chosen our leaders wisely.

Images of the original works were also used for outdoor banners that lined the University of the Philippines' Academic Oval, and created a parallel public art exhibit in a relaxed and non-intimidating environment.

Dekalogo at the Vargas Museum

Written to accompany Apolinario Mabini's draft of a constitution for the new Philippine Republic, *The True Decalogue* outlined his "10 commandments" for Filipinos and was framed to meet the needs of Filipino patriotism for all time. Indeed, the words resonate and remain relevant even today.

Ten Salingpusa artists including Elmer Borlogan, Manny Garibay, Anthony Palomo, Karen Flores, Jose Santos III, Cris Villanueva, Jim Orencio, Tammy Tan, Neil Manalo and Ferdie Montemayor reflected on Mabini's *The True Decalogue*. Each artist was assigned one commandment to interpret in a thought-provoking 5 x 4 feet artwork. CANVAS designed posters for each—using the text of the commandment and the artwork, and capped by a plea to "Vote Wisely" at the bottom. (These posters are downloadable for free on their blog *www.lookingforjuan.blogspot.com*.)

In Neil Manalo's *Ang mga Pinakahihintay* (The most awaited ones), an army wielding *walis tingtings* (broomsticks) approaches. "The title," Manalo explains, "denotes our country's hopefulness that one day, sincerity and cleanliness in the system will come." And so the army marches forward, clutching their broomsticks, but not yet sweeping. The rhythm in Manalo's painting is the very message. "There is oneness in what they chant, sing or pray," Manalo says. "As the *walis tingtings* symbolize cleanliness, the wings symbolize sincerity and conscience; and the sun headdresses symbolize inspiration to everyone who dreams of a better country."

Manny Garibay describes his work as "a picture of history taken from this point in time. It is bleak. Take it as a lament." The image came not too long after the floods. As a coincidence or effect, we see symbols of nationhood and of institutions in ruins. The Rizal monument, the Malacañang Palace, a church—symbols of tradition and patrimony—sink into what Garibay describes as "oblivion," while a bushel of bananas (a banana economy) and a basketball (his metaphor for illusion and deception for an audience so easily entertained and distracted) are the only things remaining afloat. A man and woman—perhaps OFWs, our modern-day saviors—suffer crucified underneath a caricature of justice. But amid the chaos, Mabini's expression is placid.

The image is a lament indeed—for a people who have forgotten their nobility, for a state that knows not the meaning of "sovereignty" and for a nation where social justice is compromised while corruption is rewarded—just as it is a challenge to hope and to work towards the realization of hope.

"Hope starts when people work on changing how we think. This is why art is important. Art is the expression of the ideas and aspirations of people and they form the foundation of culture," says Garibay.

HEROES AMONG US. (ABOVE) Neil Manalo's *Ang Mga Pinakahihintay*, 60 x 48 inches, oil on canvas. (BELOW) Manny Garibay's work interprets Mabini's fourth commandment to love our country. (OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) BenCab's *Mga Manggagawa*, acrylic on canvas; Aris Bagtas's painting of a mother and child; Juan Sajid Imao's *Ang Paghahati ng Oras ni Efren*, brass sculpture.

PHOTOS BY JEWEL CHUAUNSU.

CALL OF THE MUSE

Bellarocca Island Resort and Spa hosts 10 artists for a weekend of inspiration on the breathtaking shores of Marinduque. The result? A first-rate show at The Peninsula Manila Hotel that revels in the splendor of this magnificent island.

In Greek mythology, a muse was a goddess who presided over a particular art or a higher power that inspired a poet, thinker or artist. For ten of the country's most noted visual artists, this muse was a "beautiful rock" or Bellarocca.

Tucked away southwest of Marinduque, Bellarocca Island Resort and Spa brings the spirit of Santorini to our local shores. The resort architecture is completely washed in white. Its luxurious Grecian themed villas, perched atop cliffs and rolling terrain, offer stunning panoramic views of the mountains and the Sibuyan Sea.

The resort was both a source of inspiration and gracious host to the artists who were invited to indulge in an all-artists weekend. Those who answered the call of the muse: National Artist for the Visual Arts Benedicto Cabrera or BenCab, Presidential Medal of Merit Awardees Juvenal Sanso and Betsy Westendorp, sculptors Ramon Orlina and Michael Cacnio, figurative genre painters Mario Parial, Lydia Velasco, and Dominic Rubio, abstractionist Carlo Magno and Jose "Ping" Cerriola, President of the Watercolor Association of the Philippines.

The prolific and diverse art they produced were shown in an exhibit titled *10 Artists, 1 Inspiration*, organized in cooperation with *Contemporary Art Philippines*. The exhibition, which celebrated the resort's first year anniversary, was held last April 22 at the Gallery of the Peninsula Manila Hotel.

The artworks were windows into Bellarocca, capturing the sea and sky, Grecian feel and local color, and transporting the viewers into the island resort. BenCab painted a straightforward but dramatic composition of a woman looking out to sea. Sanso's paintings, with their semi-abstract, natural forms, are characterized by an otherworldly beauty and surreal quality. Westendorp presented impressionistic and atmospheric skyscapes. Orlina carved *Blue Waves* and an *Ocean Splash* from cast bronze and azure blue crystal.

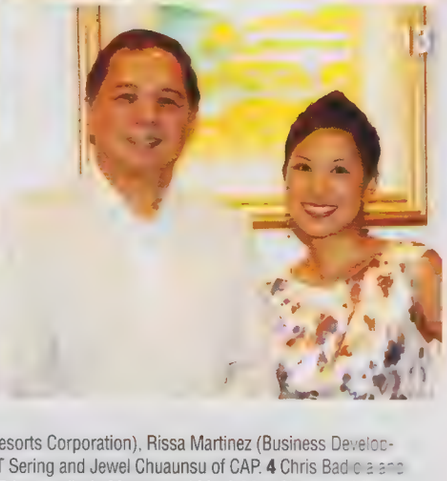
Parial and Cacnio represented the Moriones festival, one of the country's most religious and cultural celebrations, which takes place in Marinduque during the Holy Week. Parial's work is filled with ritual symbols and costumed figures rendered in bright, bold colors. Cacnio's figure of a Roman centurion seems to have been transported from the actual story of Christ's Passion and Death.

Like picture perfect postcards, Magno's landscapes have the precise, clean lines of a photograph given depth and meaning. In Velasco and Rubio's paintings, Bellarocca is seen in the far distance. Velasco's unmistakable sultry women take center stage amidst a multihued tropical paradise. Rubio's stylized figures recall 19th century Filipinos garbed in colonial attire. He situated his people types as local town folk taking a weekend boat ride and farmer folk living in the countryside. Scenes from everyday life are the subjects of watercolorist Cerriola's works. His portrayal of two young "balut" and "chicharon" vendors is animated and realistic.

Beauty and Mother Nature will always provide an endless source of inspiration for artists. But how this inspiration is sparked and manifested can vary greatly as each artist has a unique and different viewpoint. *10 Artists, 1 Inspiration* showcases the natural beauty of the Philippines as seen through the artists' eyes and reminds us of the quality, range, breadth and depth of Filipino creativity.

GONE FISHING. The artists were toured around Marinduque. What caught sculptor Michael Cacnio's eye was a fisherman bringing in the catch of the day.

PHOTOS BY SINDEL TSIAUSAS AND MARK ANTHONY VIVAR



1 Nenita "Rita" Dy (Marketing Communications and Services Manager - Singapore Airlines), Miguel Cerqueda (President - Genesis Hotels and Resorts Corporation), Rissa Martinez (Business Development Manager - *Contemporary Art Philippines*). **2** Joey Carpo, Edward Lim, Michael Cacnio (artist), Tess Cacnio, Bubu Antonio-Andres. **3** Tara FT Sering and Jewel Chuaunsu of CAP. **4** Chris Badio and Sari Yap (Founder - Mega Publishing Group). **5** Mr. and Mrs. Emerson and Lingling Yao of Lucerne with CAP Publisher Jack Teotico. **6** Suzanne Tsiausas, Carlo Magno, and Mr. & Mrs. Ciros and Marlen Tomacruz. **7** Tara Santos (Associate Publisher - Town & Country Magazine), Margaret Duavit, John Tanjangco (Director of Sales and Marketing - Bellarocca), Belle Yambao (Town & Country Magazine), Bubu Antonio-Andres, Congressman Michael John Duavit (Representative 1st District Rizal). **8** Alex Stutely (President and CEO - Blue Horizons Travel and Tours Inc.), Marc Daubenbuechel (Project Manager - Retirement and Healthcare Coalition International / ECCP), Jose Clemente (President - Worldwalker Destinations Inc.). **9** Mario and Carina Parial with Toni Jacinto, Mrs. Jacinto and Ginnocentes Jacinto. **10** Dominic Rubio and his work, *Travellers*. **11** RJ Ledesma (UNO / Philippine Star), Jennifer Sanvictores (Director of Sales and Marketing - The Farm at San Benito). **12** Congressman Michael Duavit, Gloria Angara, and Miguel Cerqueda did the ribbon cutting. Behind them are Mario Parial, Dominic Rubio, Jack Teotico, Carlo Magno, Jose Cerriola, Curator Anna Angara and Ms. Lani Duavit. **13** Jack Teotico and CAP Managing Editor Patricia Recto Tumang.

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AN ART ARMADA

Over 30 artists strike lively conversations with the Spanish masters

BY ABBY YAO

What happens when Manila's artists encounter the treasures of Madrid? *El Prado Project: Dialogue with the Masters* at the Ayala Museum, on view from April 23 to May 16, 2010, presented a wide variety of responses to this question.

Artists were invited to reinterpret seven masterpieces from the home of the Spanish Royal Collection, the Museo Nacional del Prado: Francisco Goya's haunting *The Third of May: the Executions on Príncipe Pío and Saturn Devouring His Son*; El Greco's portrait *The Nobleman with his Hand on his Chest*; Francisco de Zurbarán's vision of *St. Peter the Apostle Appearing to St. Peter Nolasco*; and Diego Velázquez's iconic *The Triumph of Bacchus*, or the *Drunkards (Los Borrachos)*; *The Fable of Arachne*, or *The Tapestry Weavers (Las Hilanderas)*; and *The Family of Felipe IV*, or *Las Meninas*. These renowned 17th and 19th century works from one of the world's greatest art museums were selected for their popularity, influence and complexity of their subject matter.

The idea for the show came from Philippines-based Spanish artist Cesar Caballero, who co-curated the exhibit with Ayala Museum senior curator Kenneth Esguerra. With assistance from the Spanish Embassy in Manila, the project had access to the images from the Prado. Artists were invited to "react to, re-interpret, re-present, adapt, re-create, remake, spook, copy, and derive inspiration from" the Spanish masterworks of their choice.

Participating artists were Ambie Abaño, Buen Abrigo, Gus Albor, Virgilio Aviado, Pablo Baen Santos, Jun Balasbas, Cesar Caballero, Valeria Cavestany, Igan D'Bayan, Ramon Diaz, Fernando Doctolero, Kidlat de Guia, Gig de Pio, Noell El Farol, Raul Isidro, Isa Lorenzo, Mervy Pueblo, Dan Raralio, Roberto Robles, Maria Victoria Rufino, Jose Tence Ruiz, Jonahmar Salvosa, Juvenal Sanso, Emmanuel Santos, Gerardo Tan, Steve Tirona, Wire Tuazon, the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts Sculptural Reproduction Casting Workshop, Betsy Westendorp, and Carmen Brias Westendorp.

All but a handful of the 41 pieces on view were specially made for the exhibition. The Spanish masterpieces were printed on tarpaulin, each accompanied by a paragraph

IMAGES COURTESY OF AYALA MUSEUM

explaining its subject and history. Although the tarpaulin prints lacked the brilliance of the original painting, this allowed the new works to stand out.

Half of the pieces took on either *Las Meninas* by Velázquez or *Nobleman* by El Greco. Dan Raralio's *Arachne's Spell*, a stainless steel sculpture of a spider, a spinning wheel, a ladder, and balls of yarn, may be the only work based on *Las Hilanderas*, but it was an intriguing frontliner.

The artists employed different methods: adding, replacing or focusing on particular elements, or retaining the composition and structure of the original work. In some cases, the Spanish paintings served as a springboard for non-figurative work. But most compelling were the artworks clearly inspired by the original but able to stand alone. *Portia*, a photograph by Steve Tirona showing a nude woman in the stance of El Greco's *Nobleman*.

finds its power in the figure's defiant attitude. Ambie Abaño's installation *Portrait of a Portrait Artist* takes the artist's self-portrait in *Las Meninas* and blows it up on woodcut silkscreen prints.

Jose Tence Ruiz's hoopskirted fembot in *Blue-Skreen Kotillion* and the gothic imagery of Igan D'Bayan's *The Cartimar Crucifixion No. 2 (After Zurbaran)* dominate the space because of their size and central position. Emmanuel Santos' photographs, named after each of the Spanish artists, channel the spirit of the Spanish works in the thought-provoking images, notably Velasquez with its nude angels and veiled nurse, and Zurbaran, where the Filipino flagellants and crucified Christ appear alongside the Spanish *nazarenos* in their robes and pointed hoods.

It is no secret that students learn by copying the masters before venturing on their own paths. Even in her 80s, Betsy Westendorp was honored to copy El Greco in pastel and inserted her printed references inside the frame. The younger artists ably delivered a contemporary approach using the materials they are most comfortable with. In Kidlat de Guia's mixed media sculpture *The Return of Saturn*, a video of shanties being destroyed adds a social dimension to his lightbox-and-hollow-blocks titan. Buen Abrigo also uses mixed media for his wall-bound collage *May 3rd Execution (Goya)*. With Manila City Hall in the background, his one-eyed monster bursts through tabloid headlines alternating with strips of color, a hat tip to the Prado's *Collosus*, once attributed to Goya, by way of Ray Harryhausen's stop-motion Cyclops in the 1958 film, *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*.

There is not a single smiling figure in *Mga Amuyong at Amo-Amuhan Dahil sa Kalashengan* by Jun Balasbas, but it is the most comic piece. Although some might find it inappropriate for a museum, its value lies in its light-hearted tribute. That it is possible to parody and poke fun at the masters shows their wide acceptance and place in culture and history.

Javier Martinez Cifuentes, Israel Pellús Gonzalez, Cesar Caballero, and the artists and students of the UP CFA Materials and Techniques Studio Classes pay homage to Manolo Valdes' bronze sculptures of the Reina Mariana in *Las Meninas* using fiberglass, epoxy resin and bronze paint. The result may be copies of another artist's interpretation, but the addition of the red noose, barbed wire and wine bottles give the two downsized reproductions massive impact. The viewer either ponders the destructive consequences of slavery to the bottle or awaits the gunpowder explosions of an empire at war.

El Prado Project initiates an engaging dialogue that not only brings pleasure to art lovers but also educates its younger viewers. The exhibit is not without its share of misses, but the truly remarkable work makes up for the low points. If the curators have the energy to continue the project, it would be interesting to see our local artists take on Murillo or Goya's *Maja*, or move out of the Prado and attempt to work on modern art, or even attempt an equal relationship with contemporary Spanish artists to get precious feedback and real-time exchange. The curators could then set limits on the size and the number of works per artist to give each piece the space it deserves. But even if it all ends here, it is enough to know that such a project could be fruitful and that there are no empty vessels in this fleet.

1 Luis Cuesta and wife with Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of Chili in Manila, Alvero Trejo from the Embassy of Spain. **2** Vicky Zubiri, Arturo Luz. **3** Jaime Laya, Spanish Ambassador Luis Arias, Alfredo Roca. **4** Carmen Westendorp-Brias, Betsy Westendorp and friend. **5** Nancy Lim of Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Guillermo Luz (Ayala Museum Director), Dennis Manzano (CEO - Sony Ericsson). **6** Kenneth Esguerra, Pablo Baen Santos, Virgillio Aviado, Igan D'Bayan, Raul Isidro. **7** Madame Sol Arias, Beth Day Romulo, Tina and Rupert Jacinto. **8** Ramon Diaz, Kidlat de Guia. **9** Silvana Diaz, Tessie Luz, Bambi Harper.

SPANISH INFLUENCE. Artworks from the *El Prado Project*. (TOP) Cesar Caballero's *The Gentleman Without his Hand on his Breast*, 2010, 158 x 126.5 cm, oil on canvas. (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP) Buen Abrigo's *May 3rd Execution (Goya)*, 2010, 121.9 x 182.9 cm, mixed media.

VISIONS OF UTOPIA

Popular culture collides with cyberspace in a refreshing exhibit at Finale Art File

BY PATRICIA RECTO TUMANG

The ideas and scale are grand, but curator Jose Tence Ruiz eagerly rises to the challenge. For his group show *YOUTubia: New Works, Effigies and Videoke* (April 8 to May 2, 2010) the amphitheater-like space of Finale Art File provides an appropriate venue for large-scale installations, raucous clamorings and what Ruiz cheekily refers to as "leftist agitation".

The old vanguard of Social Realism has teamed up with a fresh crop of voices to tackle new realities that emerge when the Internet morphs into, or infects, visions of utopia. "Alice Guillermo's 1987 definition of Social Realism is very broad and I wanted to stick to the spirit of this breadth and reach out, contaminate, cross-pollinate, hear new voices, see more approaches from a more recent generation of artists," says Ruiz. "*YOUTubia*, of course, is acknowledgement and exasperation. Utopia has devolved into Internet entertainment. But that is it and it is incumbent upon me to accept and reflect this."

Artists Pablo Baen Santos, Tatong Recheta Torres, Renato Habulan, Costantino Zicarelli, Antipas Delotavo, Mideo M. Cruz, Leonilo Doloricon, Christina Quisumbing Ramilo, Iggy Rodriguez, Buen Calubayan, Jose Tence Ruiz and J. Pacena present a boisterous and illuminating assemblage of paintings, drawings, effigies, installations, digital prints, video—and even videoke. The artists are given only one instruction: to create new works that speak to the present—however they envision it—and the influence of the Internet and social media like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

"All participants had their choice of motifs and approach. I would only work to cobble them together, try to negotiate some unity in all this difference. That was the challenge, that would be the burden, possibly also the desired result. Curating is governed by one four-letter word: HOPE," says Ruiz.

Even with the varied styles and approaches, there is uniformity among the choir, as the artworks similarly reflect dissonance and dissolution. Pablo Baen Santos's works are a take on simian politics, with politicians hanging like monkeys on the cords of the Monumento MRT station. J. Pacena's *The Feast Has Ended* is an impressive installation of at least 15 canvases composed of acrylic, lacquer and digital prints, with figures freefalling into a metaphorical cyberspace. Christina Quisumbing Ramilo's innovative spin on videoke invites guests to sing unabashedly as lyrics are projected against a backdrop of revolving images of contemporary Filipino art.

Leonilo Dolorcon's digital print entitled *US Diplomacy* imposes a fast-food cheeseburger above a trio of a repeating image—an American soldier carrying a bound Asian woman whose face is partially covered by cloth, a critique on globalization and the media's glorification of the American military as third-world saviors. Another of his works, *Na-Edsahan Tayo*, employs this same technique of repetitive imagery. Three Ferdinand Marcoses keep the same posture on a canvas dissected into six parts, all representing symbols of the three EDSA protests: The first Marcos is positioned above an image of the "*Laban*" hand sign; the second Marcos has a Joseph "Erap" Estrada moustache and below it, a clenched fist; the third has a thick mole above the lip like Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, with a raised fist underneath.

Other resonant pieces include Antipas Delotavo's urban cityscapes juxtaposed with blue-collar workers, Renato Habulan's portrayals of Jesus figures as ritual decoration and Tatong Recheta Torres's surreal painting of a dissolving face.

"As I described, this is group therapy with yearnings of contamination," says Ruiz. "YouTube has infected Utopia. It is not dystopia, just YOUTubia, which is not a failure or a disappointment, but an eye-opener to a new reality, unfolding, intimidating, still untested and unqualified, but true and undeniably pervasive and contemporary."

Finale Art File is located at Warehouse 17, La Fuerza Compound, Gate 1, 2241 Pasong Tamo, Makati City, Philippines.

IMAGES COURTESY OF FINALE ART FILE.

VIRTUAL REALITY. (BELOW) Tatong Recheta Torres's *Untitled*, 2010, 72 x 96 inches, oil on canvas. (TOP) Antipas Delotavo's *P2 Pass*, 2008, 48 x 60 inches, oil on canvas.

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Tres Marias, 25.75 x 31.5 in. oil on canvas 1982

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Gallery Frames
Known for their selection of frames made from different materials, Gallery Frames helps preserve valuable art. It also has an interesting collection for prints both for the home and the office. Located at the Fourth Level, SM Megamall A. Contact 6355684.

Galerie Y
With its relentless drive to showcase the art works of both emerging and established Filipino artists, Galerie Y is known for its timely and timeless collection. It is owned and run by Lyn Yusi, a senior lecturer and the UP College of Fine Arts. Located at the Fourth Level SM Megamall A. Contact 6342704 or visit our website at www.members.tripod.com/galeriey.

Renaissance
Influenced by the realism of the Renaissance period, the Renaissance Art Gallery is also a place of emerging young artists with incredible talent. Among these is 32 year old Max Balatbat, who has won 3 awards both locally and internationally in 2009. Located at the Fourth Level, SM Megamall A. Contact 637-3109.

Upcoming Masterpieces...

May 12-25, Passion Arts Gallery featuring artist, Remy Boquiren

This May 12-25, be inspired by one of the passionate painters, Remy Boquiren, who will be exhibited at Passion Arts Gallery. She's known for her paintings of women, which are mostly prayerful, in oil and pastel. Being a prayerful woman herself, Remy wishes to inspire women, and encourage them to become closer to God with her paintings. Located at SM Megamall A, 4th Floor, Contact 6342422

May 28 - June 13, Purple Arts Gallery featuring artist, Jimmy Kwong.

Rural Filipino life captured in painting, these are the works of Jimmy Kwong, which will be showcased at Purple Arts Gallery on May 28 to June 13.

June 16-29, Renaissance Art Gallery Anniversary Show.

Celebrate the rebirth of Art and the beauty of contemporary artists' works at Renaissance Art Gallery's Anniversary Show this June 16-29.

The Big and Small Art Co.
With its modern take on Medieval art currently on exhibit, the Big and Small Art Co. showcases the creative works of highly original artists. Located at the Fourth Level of SM Megamall A. Contact 687-7425

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TRENDS

In its 5th year, Art Beijing Contemporary Art Fair continues to generate a positive buzz in the international art market

BY PATRICIA RECTO TUMANG

One of China's most celebrated contemporary art events, "Art Beijing" has entered its fifth year in 2010. This year's fair, held from April 29 to May 2, 2010 at Beijing's National Agricultural Exhibition

ART IN ANY LANGUAGE.
Liu Jinggang's *Spatial Calligraphy*, 2009
480 x 280 x 400cm, steel, spray-paint

www.contemporaryartplatform.com

CHANGING OF THE GUARD. (ABOVE) Public artworks are a new addition to Art Beijing. (BELOW) Jiang Shuo's *Red Guard - Rose*, 2010, 73 x 55 cm, bronze.

Center, came during a critical time as the international market experiences an upsurge and revitalized interest in Chinese contemporary art. The global financial crisis has waned and the art market is emboldened with a new vitality. As key figures in the art and collecting communities came together for Art Beijing 2010, the market's new optimism has become more palpable.

Conversations sparked at Beijing's National Agricultural Exhibition Center during Art Beijing Contemporary Art Fair 2010 (otherwise known as "Art Beijing") as China's most celebrated artists, galleries and collectors converged with a global audience. From the lavish VIP exhibition preview on April 29, 2010, which heralded the opening of this much-anticipated art fair—displaying a number of important works by China's most renowned contemporary artists, including Fang Lijun, Yue Minjun, Zhang Xiaogang, Wang Guangyi, Liu Xiaodong, Zeng Fanzhi, Wu Guanzhong and Chen Yifei—Art Beijing 2010 didn't disappoint.

As one of the top art fairs in Asia, Art Beijing successfully gathered a distinguished array of art communities from around the world. Building solid momentum from Fine Art Beijing, which had an impressive turnout last fall, Art Beijing 2010 represented a fine example of current trends and new directions in the contemporary international and Asian art market.

The diversity in media, style and scope was key evidence of the art market's recovery. Over 18 countries and regions were represented at the fair, with Asian galleries accounting for 60% of the total number of exhibitors. The exhibition's striking 13,000 square meter venue provided visitors with an ideal arena for viewing and admiring works by top Chinese artists like Wang Huaiqing, Fang Lijun and Yue Minjun, who were exhibited alongside works by contemporary international masters, including Marc Quinn and Gerhard Richter.

One of the most highly anticipated exhibitions at the fair was Photo Beijing 2010, an exhibition of Chinese and international photography, which marked the launch of Art Platform, a non-profit project that cooperates with embassies, art institutions and museums from across the globe to support photographic arts and work by photographers both in China and internationally. These artists define many of the styles and schools of contemporary Chinese art and are continually innovating and redefining their artistic languages and styles.

Other noteworthy exhibitions at Art Beijing 2010 included the Fashion Beijing

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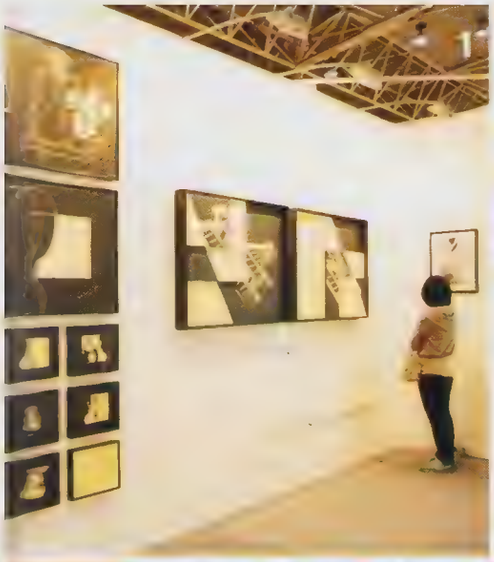
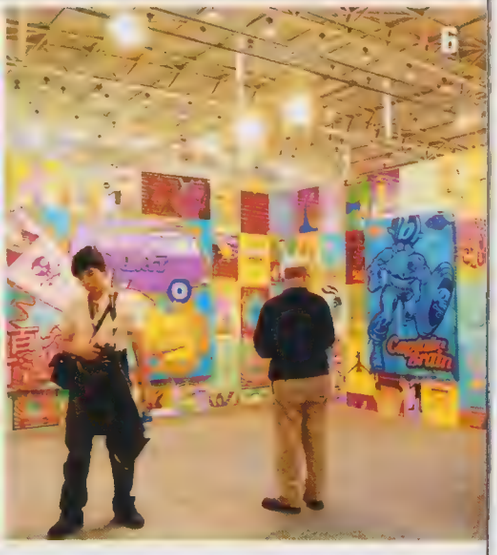
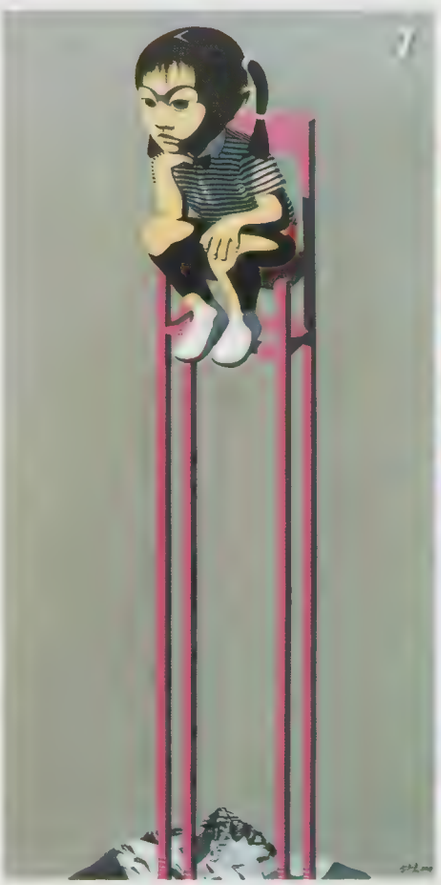




2010 International Fashion Photography Exhibition, which was a collaboration with Harper's BAZAAR, VISION and Photographers' Companion. Together, they created a platform for international and Chinese photographers, fashion designers, collectors and art lovers to explore the relationships driving forward new transformations of art and fashion.

As international stakeholders in the art and collecting communities came together for Art Beijing 2010, it was evident that Art Beijing Contemporary Art Fair has become a special annual meeting place for galleries, artists, critics and collectors to celebrate contemporary art and discuss development trends for the near future. This year's Art Beijing Contemporary Fine Art Fair was the most diverse and international art fair Beijing has seen to date.

For more information, please visit *www.artbeijing.net*.



CHINA AND BEYOND.
1 Shinjiro Okamoto's *Big Moving Picture*. **2** A sculpture that plays with the feminine form. **3** Books and magazines were also sold at the art fair. **4** Sui Jianguo's *Made in China* dinosaur sculpture faces off against a giant beagle sculpture. **5** Luo Brothers' *Welcome* sculpture. **6** Antonio Gomez Bueno's *Project in Progress*. **7** Li Zhihong's *Thinking Cat*. **8** AES+F's *Last Riot 2 Carrouel*. **9** Anais Martane's *Yue Minjun or the art of taking nothing seriously*.

THE ULTIMATE URBAN OASIS

From chic retro to first-class sophistication, Beijing's fine hotels and restaurants are a sanctuary in a bustling metropolis

BY PATRICIA RECTO TUMANG

Just a comfortable 4-hour flight on Cathay Pacific's world-class airline, Dragonair, whose pleasant in-flight experience would enliven even the weariest of travelers, Beijing is an ideal getaway for those seeking a respite from Manila's languid heat. From glittery boulevards with the finest name brand stores and high-end shopping complexes to an ancient and illustrious imperial walled city, Beijing is a sleek destination that blends antiquated charm with artistic and modern appeal.

Where to Stay

JW Marriott Hotel Beijing

One of the few hotels in Beijing to feature double-story, floor to ceiling windows upon entrance, the Lobby at the JW Marriot Beijing, spirals up a light-filled atrium, topped with a unique rectangular chandelier dripping with iridescent Baccarat crystals.

At its heart, the modern Lobby Lounge gives a nod to Chinese heritage through the incorporation of designs featuring the "five elements" of feng shui: soothing water features, intricate stone gardens, cool marble floors, wooden wall panels, and fusion foliage and flower presentations. Light leather sofas and armchairs are interspersed with avant-garde arrangements of lilies and orchids, while a virtual forest of bamboo sets the scene for a delicately calligraphed feature wall bestowing health and fortune upon guests. Also representing longevity and wealth, the traditional Chinese lion's hair design winds its way across backlit pillars and carpets throughout the lobby.

In keeping with the chic designer stores and ultra-modern architecture surrounding the hotel in the Shin Kong Place and China Central Place malls, guest rooms and suites at the JW Marriott Hotel Beijing combine modern design elements and creature comforts with ease to create a contemporary oasis in the heart of Beijing's thriving business district.

Chief designers, Hirsch Bedner & Associates Design Consultants, have crafted an inspiring yet inviting environment. The intent is to transcend time and place and lend an unmistakable sense of accessible luxury and subtle sophistication. Furnishings and accessories are fashioned from a sensual blend of colors and textures, forming a light, airy and immediately tactile experience. Large windows fill rooms with a warm glow: those facing south feature serene garden views, while north facing rooms offer a vista of bustling China Central Place and beyond to Chaoyang Park.

Paying homage to China's thriving modern art scene, vibrant contemporary paintings adorn the walls, matched with throw pillows and hand-embroidered quilts in intense summer and autumn shades and cheerful floral patterns.

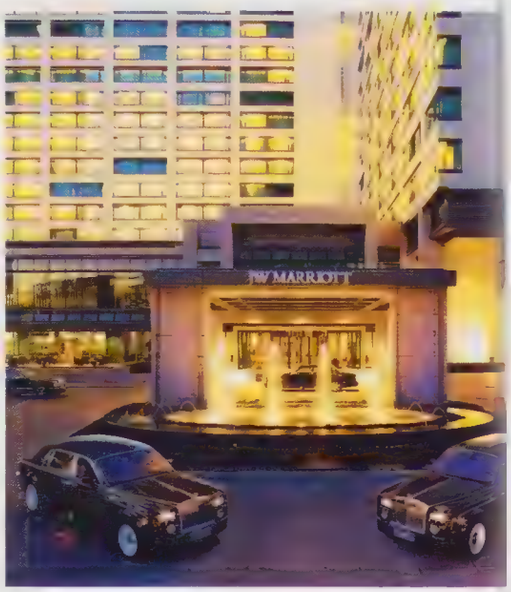
The flagship JW Marriott Hotel in China's thriving capital and the 3000th property for Marriott International worldwide, the JW Marriott Hotel Beijing offers all the luxuries of modern living alongside the comforts of home.

JW Marriott Beijing is located at 83 Jian Guo Road, Chaoyang District Beijing, in Beijing, China. For more information, please visit *www.marriott.com*.

Hotel G Beijing

Inspired by the retro chic of the 1960s, Hotel G, a stylish and exciting new addition to China's capital, is the latest designer boutique hotel in Beijing. With a striking entrance and façade which transforms into an explosion of colored lights by night (hotel guests can actually select their own window lighting), the 110-room hotel opened in October 2008 in Gong Ti Xi Lu—neighboring a host of popular eateries and nightspots including the ultra chic Green T. House.

Catering to the niche market of design-conscious, sophisticated young professionals, entrepreneurs, celebrities and



IMAGES COURTESY OF JW MARRIOTT BEIJING AND HOTEL G BEIJING.

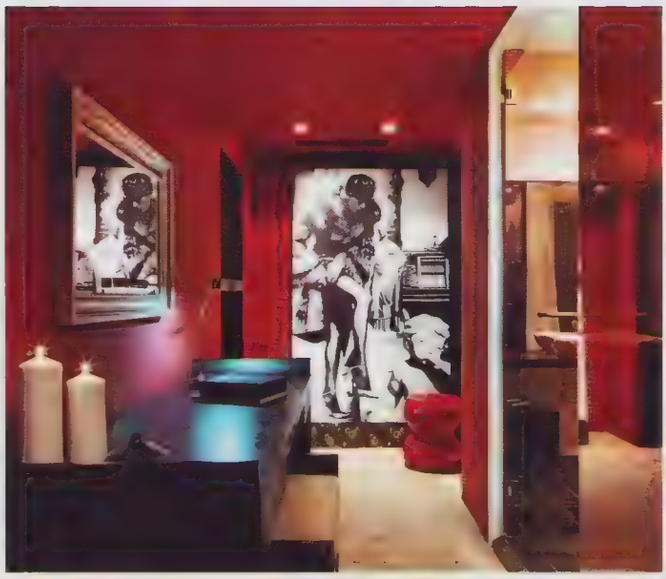
BALANCE AND HARMONY. (AT RIGHT) JW Marriott Hotel Beijing is located in the east edge of the Central Business District. (TOP) The Lobby at the JW Marriott features feng shui design elements

socialites, Hotel G Beijing is the first of an exclusive boutique hotel brand launched by Hong Kong-based real estate private equity management firm Gaw Capital, headed by real estate entrepreneur Goodwin Gaw who is renowned for the recent $24 million restoration of the iconic Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel in Los Angeles.

"The concept is stylish and comfortable, with outstanding design in a seemingly casual blend of understated glamour and low key opulence, offering fashionable restaurants and bars, and the friendly, personalized service we like to offer our guests," says Gaw. "Our philosophy is to create a hotel that is both memorable and inviting."

The sense of theatre begins at the lobby of Hotel G with warm red sandstone walls and a central column finished in stitched leather. Hotel G's 110 rooms are all generous in scale, ranging from the standard good room to a series of super deluxe, loft-style suites with raised bed area and a large bathroom complete with freestanding tub. Mark Lintott, the talented British architect/designer well known for his daring and innovative interior design projects in Taiwan, has created a series of stylish 60s-inspired designs in muted blues and grays highlighted with lacquered color and abstract traditional Chinese details in the modern furnishings.

Hotel G Beijing is located at No. A7 Gongtixilu, Chaoyang District Beijing, in Beijing, China. For more information, please visit *www.hotel-g.com*.



RETRO COOL.
(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) The Greater Room—the suites at Hotel G are ranked from good to greatest; The 60s aesthetic is evident in the lobby/resting area; *Tapas* at *Scarlett*.

Where to Dine

Cru Steakhouse

A paradise for meat and oyster lovers, Cru Steakhouse serves the finest cuts of meat alongside a wide variety of oysters plucked fresh from oceans around the world.

The catch of the day is displayed with other regional delicacies at a cool ice bar, allowing guests to pick and choose fillets of fancy. In a Beijing first, Cru Steakhouse also features a state-of-the-art meat aging room as well as the open kitchen area serving the signature dishes of fine meats.

Like the food, the restaurant design is crisp and contemporary, featuring rich, warm colors reflecting those used in the cooking: wine red candles and carpets, chocolate backed chairs, and ash hued tables and room dividers. Dark wood is also used to create a striking curtain wave along garden side windows—a work of art in itself.

To accompany the impressive cuisine, Cru Steakhouse offers a selection of over 250 exclusive bottles of wine: from bold new world reds to the finest Chardonnays, the rarest dessert wines and everything in between. The exceptional collection is displayed in striking glass-encased pillars around the restaurant, as well as at the intimate wine bar and in private rooms—ideal for wine tastings and cozy gatherings.

Cru Steakhouse is located at Level 2, JW Marriott Hotel Beijing.

Scarlett

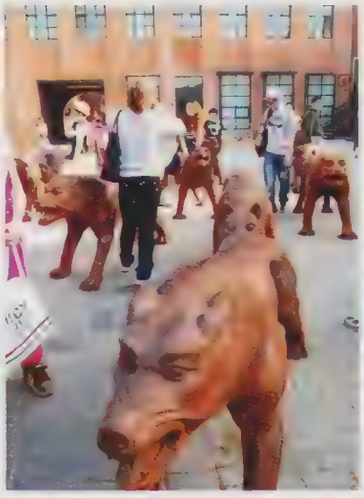
With more than 80 different wine labels, combined with one of Beijing's largest cheese selections and cold cuts, daily specials, *tapas* and legendary burgers all available on a stylish European-style menu, Scarlett is the latest meeting point for young executives and travelers who enjoy gourmet food at a decent price.

In this relaxed yet chic and fun atmosphere next to the bustling Sanlitun bar district, guests can choose to sit at the long bar with high-rise wooden tables, or lounge in the luxurious leather sofas. Promotions revolving around different wines, drinks and food designed to attract various crowds of revelers are also part of the concept, which includes weekend DJs and Live entertainment.

The menu also includes an exquisite range of seafood specialties, salads, pastas and house specials such as Australian sirloin, roast lamb chops, duck and chicken, all served with fries or jacket potatoes. Classic French desserts range from crème brulee and chocolate mousse to chocolate fondant and nougat.

"Scarlett is an ideal place for breaking away from routine and adding some fun to life. It has a unique atmosphere and ambience, serving wine, cheese and a wide rage of simple food at a reasonable price," says Alex Chakrabarti, General Manager of Hotel G Beijing.

Scarlett is located on the ground floor of Hotel G Beijing.



BEIJING'S HIP HAVEN FOR ARTISTS

798 boasts of a lively slew of prominent art galleries within a sprawling, neo-industrial factory zone

BY PATRICIA RECTO TUMANG

Williamsburg, Brooklyn meets SoHo, Manhattan in the artsy design complex known as Beijing 798 Art Zone, located on the outskirts of Beijing's fashionable Chaoyang District. The only sign pointing to its existence is a display of large, bright red numbers at the entrance. Nondescript factory buildings rise above tree-lined streets, giving the semblance of a desolate concrete jungle. Venturing further, the towering structures of steel and brick are a clever disguise for Beijing's famous art galleries, chic coffeehouses and trendy boutiques, hidden gems that can be found if you follow the trail of the white rabbit—that is, with a map in hand for reassurance, but allowing yourself to be guided by your senses.

This 100,000 square meter urban compound contains a bevy of artistic treasures in a casual atmosphere where artists set up their wares—hand-made jewelry, crocheted items and the like—along the area's graffiti-lined blocks. Hipsters collide with yuppies at the used bookstore where books about Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin align the window displays. Fashionistas sip macchiatos and read design magazines at many of its popular, art-deco coffeehouses. Tourists rub elbows with local hippies at one of the curio stores selling Etsy-like finds: silk-screened graphic tees and earrings made of old-school computer keys. Spacious, light-filled galleries expand like aviator wings as people take in the latest fads and shows on contemporary Chinese art in settings big enough to house a plane (or two).

It wasn't always this hip. Before Beijing 798 Art Zone became the city's premier epicenter for art and culture in the past decade, it consisted primarily of 718 Joint Factory, the Beijing North China wireless joint equipment factory built in the 1950s. In fact, the factory was a production house for the Chinese military's top-secret armories. A German architectural firm that specialized in Bauhaus design took charge of the architectural planning, with the desire to fuse practicality with technical prowess and tasteful design. The Bauhaus design manifested Chairman Mao's vision of an ideal Communist state, one that promotes heavy industry. In April 1964, 718 Joint Factory underwent a redesign to incorporate the construction and addition of several more factories, becoming Beijing Sevenstar Science and Technology Co., LTD in December 2000. However, since the factories remained empty during the reform plan, the Seven Group decided to rent out the plants for short-term use.

The Bauhaus style of architecture was a great draw for art crowds to descend upon the abandoned plants, infusing them with a new purpose and paving the way for the thriving arts district the area is now known as. Now, half of the factory complex is rented and more than 50 galleries call 798 home, including Tang Contemporary Art, Long March Space, 798 space and The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, which occupies the largest space at 4,500 square meters.

Over the past few years, 798 has transformed from brick and mortar tenements and factories into a lively art carnival where you can spend a carefree day snapping pictures of kitschy public sculptures, check out a fresh exhibit or stroll down narrow lanes with one-of-a-kind designer wares and fun items like hand-painted ocarinas (flute-like wind instrument) and Vivienne Westwood's latest shoe collection. Beijing 798 Art Zone is the place to be—whether you are an artist yourself, a collector or merely a curious pedestrian making your rounds through Beijing's top destinations, 798 will surely lure you in and put you under the spell of art.

LIVING AND BREATHING ART .
(AT LEFT) Quirky public artworks can be found at 798 Space. (TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT) A street artist finds a nice spot for drawing portraits; A pack of sculptural wolves makes for the perfect photo opportunity; The architecture design of 798 takes off from the Bauhaus style in the 1950s.

PHOTOS BY PATRICIA RECTO TUMANG.

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Chopard

The Art of Chopard

Chopard's Animal World Collection reveals an artistic and evocative bestiary.

To celebrate the occasion of its 150th anniversary, Chopard has taken on the new challenge of signing a Haute Joaillerie collection of 150 unique animal-themed pieces. True to its legendary creativity and boldness, the company has mobilized all its talent for this birthday collection, drawing on its long experience to mix tradition, advanced techniques and documented research, and taking its taste for excellence and novelty to new heights. The result is an extraordinary collection of beautiful, mysterious and dream-like animals. With this wonderful jungle, which sometimes evokes the strange and magical world of Henri Rousseau, Chopard has more than ever met its ultimate goal of creating dreams.

Collective Memory

Over the years, the extraordinary collection of Jorge B. Vargas has grown from an assortment of objects into an institution engaged in the promotion of Philippine art, civic education and the transformation of society.

TEXT BY JEWEL CHUAUNSU
PHOTOGRAPHS BY STAN ONG

Perhaps it was in Jorge B. Vargas's sensibility to amass objects. As the Philippines' first Executive Secretary, serving during the Commonwealth period in 1935 under President Manuel Quezon, he was the custodian of many significant documents. Later, Quezon tasked his esteemed secretary to look after the Filipino people when he appointed him Mayor of Manila in 1942, the year that marked the beginning of the Japanese Occupation.

THE COLLECTOR'S IMPULSE.
One of the more recent exhibits held at the Vargas Museum is *Stock* by Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan. Like Jorge B. Vargas, they're avid collectors with a habit of keeping and investing things with sentiment.

As much as Vargas was preoccupied with state affairs, he was also active in carving out an extraordinary collection of art, stamps, coins, books and archives. When art schools, publishing and advertising companies closed down during the Japanese Occupation, Vargas commissioned paintings or bought artworks from displaced artists.

To wit, he collected 524 artworks, more than 80,000 pieces of Philippine stamps, approximately 4,000 coins, 88 boxes of loose documents such as artwork receipts, minutes of meetings and correspondence, 332 volumes of scrapbooks containing newspaper clippings, greeting cards and photographs, and memorabilia such as trophies and plaques, hotel keys, matches and lighters.

The collection was originally displayed in a private museum located at the Kawilihan compound in Mandaluyong. In 1978, Vargas donated his collection to his alma mater, the University of the Philippines (UP). On February 22, 1987, the Jorge B. Vargas Museum and Filipiniana Research Center was formally inaugurated by then-President Corazon C. Aquino.

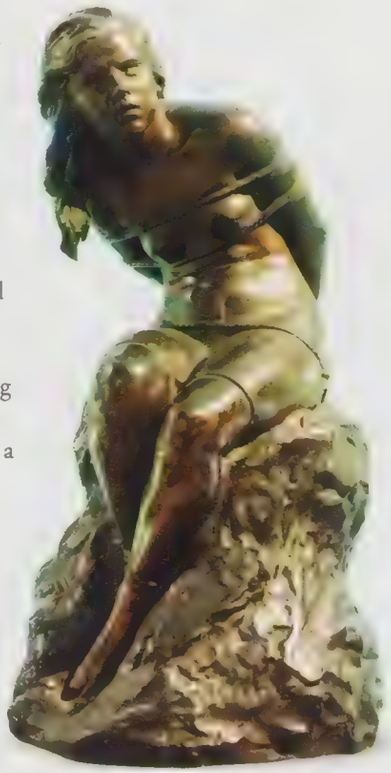
Though more popularly known for its rich collection of artworks by renowned Filipino artists, the museum is also home to a diverse body of archives and manuscripts that is considered to be a unique and primary source of historical information on the Commonwealth era, the American colonial period and the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines.

Art Studies

The museum is committed to the exhibition and conservation of the Vargas collection, as well as developing a museum study program at UP together with the Department of Art Studies, which gives students a firsthand experience of art and an avenue for cultural life on campus. Teachers don't have to content themselves with showing images in the classroom—they can take pride in actually showing their students a real Amorsolo.

Art itself is a learning resource that touches on multiple disciplines. "If it's an art class, the teacher can talk about technique. If it's a humanities class, he can talk about the relationship between art and

ART HISTORY 101.
(TOP TO BOTTOM) The university art museum was established to address the academic and cultural needs of students; Guillermo Tolentino's *Filipinas in Bondage* is a good example of a classical sculpture.



society. If it's a sociology class, maybe the relationship between art and the market," explains museum curator Patrick Flores.

All of their exhibitions have an educational component. They produce syllabi for the exhibitions and distribute it to the faculty. In the future, they also want to develop a three-tiered program for elementary, high school and college students (UP established an integrated school offering primary and secondary education), and come up with packages for teachers who are inclined to use the museum as a resource. Adds Flores, "I am sure that when you initiate a student into the world of art, on his own, he or she will go back to the museum or explore other museums in the country."

Designed by Honorato Palomo, the museum building has several glass windows. Natural light streams in. There's a feeling of transparency. From the inside, you have a sense of what is outside and vice versa. You'll see trees, notice people walking on the street and hear ambient sounds. But it's quiet enough inside that it doesn't compromise your art viewing experience. "It doesn't give you an illusion of isolation from the world. There's this idea that a museum is like a shrine of sacred objects, when art really is part of social life. It's produced by artists responding to historical conditions. This kind of set-up will remind the viewer that art is part of the world," says Flores. Art is indeed made very accessible. The admission fee is minimal—PHP20 for UP students and PHP30 for non-UP students. Guided tours are available for free upon request.

THE LAY OF THE LAND.
The theme for this section of the main gallery is Province, characterized by landscape paintings. (ABOVE) Cesar Legaspi's *The Guitarist.*

"There's this idea that a museum is like a shrine of sacred objects, when art really is part of social life. It's produced by artists responding to historical conditions."

– *Patrick Flores*

Birth of a Nation

The Philippines was ruled by Spain for 333 years. Filipino artists achieved a level of mastery in the late 19th century, having spent years abroad in Europe studying art. The recognition that the expatriates Luna and Hidalgo secured in the salons of the West would set standards, but soon tilted toward a modern direction by way of Impressionism. The Enlightenment stirred the elite to seek reforms from Spain and the aspiration to be free fired up the masses to wage a revolution.

Selected artworks are featured in the museum's collection, which spans the late 19th century works of the old masters to the post-war era of the Modernists. The works of Juan Luna, Félix Resurrección Hidalgo, Fernando Amorsolo, Guillermo Tolentino, Vicente Manansala, Cesar Legaspi and Victorio C. Edades are represented in the collection.

Historical context has shaped the story of Philippine art. As such, the exhibit is organized chronologically and divided into four themes—Light, Province, Unease and Passage—corresponding to the Enlightenment, landscapes, war and modern art.

WAR AND PEACE.
(TOP TO BOTTOM) Paintings that show the ruins of war are set in contrast to genre paintings that look back to a more idyllic existence; Fernando Amorsolo's 1943 portrait of Vargas with Premier Tojo was titled *"Independence this Year" Said His Excellency, Premier Tojo.*

Province is represented by landscape and genre paintings, which became popular during the American period. The United States colonized the Philippines at the beginning of the 20th century and claimed the land of its conquest. To the Americans, the country seemed like an exotic paradise, untouched by civilization. Fernando Amorsolo's pastoral scenes and rural landscapes were at the center of this imagination.

The Commonwealth was a season of transition under the auspices of the Americans—a frantic time to build a republic. All would come to a halt during the Pacific War: Manila lay in ruins and the Japanese tried to fashion what was seen as a Catholic and western country into an image of the Orient. The art included in Unease fleshed out this fretfulness: a nostalgia for peace and the need to bear witness to the ravages of conflict. Here we see the other side of Amorsolo as his works document the destruction caused by war.

Rising from the ashes of war, the Philippines stood its ground as an independent nation, with its state steered by the landed elite. This freedom instilled a different consciousness of the self. Modern art, featured in Passage, was part of this toil and quest for identity: to conceive an art faithful to its origin and, at the same time, inventive enough to be original.

Key pieces in the permanent collection include Simon Flores's *Primeras Letras*, Luna's *Picnic in Normandy*, Amorsolo's *Fishing Scene*, Guillermo Tolentino's *Filipinas in Bondage* and Victorio Edades's *Bulul at Babae*. Simon Flores is an important transition from the miniaturist school of portraiture in the mid-19th century and the genre-focused Amorsolo school in the early part of the

STOCK EXHIBIT PHOTOS COURTESY OF VARGAS MUSEUM.

20th century. Meanwhile, Luna's work, done in France, references the global and cosmopolitan context of a Filipino artist in the 19th century and also references a shift in tendency of Luna towards Impressionism.

Vargas was a patron and close friend of Amorsolo. The collection has the distinction of having 57 Amorsolo works—the highest number of Amorsolos in a private or public collection. *Fishing Scene* stands out for its scale and execution. It was commissioned during the war years. Victorio Edades was one of the pioneer Modernists who offered an alternative to the style of Amorsolo. His *Bulul at Babae* references the Modernist style and pays homage to local culture with the *bulul*, a rice god revered by the Ifugao tribe of northern Luzon. Another major work is Guillermo Tolentino's classical sculpture, *Filipinas in Bondage*, which alludes to oppression.

Then and Now

The collection loses its spirit if it is not felt in the context of current history and present consciousness. The Vargas Museum initiates conversations between the art of the past and contemporary expression. Through contemporary art, they are able to bring in a younger audience. "I mixed contemporary art in the collection so they would not feel this is a room full of relics, but it is a room about contemporary life," says Flores.

The contemporary works pertain to the themes and contribute to the discourse. For Light, Flores included Mark Salvatus's *Secret Garden 2*, which is about a secret garden fashioned by prisoners at Quezon Provincial Jail. The installation has an element of concealment and revelation through light. Also in this section is Poklong Anading's photography involving a mirror that reflects light.

Robert Feleo's pantheon of indigenous superheroes fits right in with Province. Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizans's *Belonging In-transit* calls attention to immigration and dislocation—situations that give a feeling of Unease. The video work of Cocoy Lumbao depicts travel around a place, connoting Passage.

The politics and culture intersected in Vargas's life during a time of war and nation building. Disparate as they may be, there is a relationship between the practice of collecting art and forging a republic. In his speech delivered at a banquet in honor of Juan Luna and Félix Resurrección Hidalgo in 1884, Jose Rizal had said: "Genius has no country." According to Flores, this implies that if a country is able to produce this kind of genius, then it doesn't deserve to be enslaved, but to be sovereign. Art is a testimony to a high level of consciousness and deserves an equivalent expression—in freedom, in the formation of a nation, in independence.

SEEN IN A NEW LIGHT.
(ABOVE) Poklong Anading's *Anonymity # 73*. (BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT) Mark Salvatus's *Secret Garden 2* can be glimpsed through a door that's slightly open; Contemporary art is exhibited in the ground floor galleries. (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM) Victorio Edades's *Bulul at Babae*; The Aquilizans' installation of wings were made from slippers worn by prisoners in a Singaporean correctional facility.

Sabel

BenCab's Iconic Muse

TEXT BY RENE E. GUATLO

A scavenger, an abandoned wife, a forlorn mother—BenCab finds inspiration in a woman whose dimensions render a searing portrait of the state of the nation.

She is a woman of indeterminate age, her head hidden in the folds of plastic and cloth that cover her body. Her abundant hair is unkempt and matted with dirt. Her hands are gathered in fists, against which she rests a proud chin, eyes in tight slits, seeming to peer at things unseen. She is Sabel, a vagrant on Bambang Street in the Santa Cruz district, near its shared border with Tondo where National Artist Benedicto R. Cabrera (more popularly known as BenCab) used to live in an *accessoria* with his parents and siblings. Sabel has gained fame as one of the iconic figures in BenCab's body of work, her flowing robes and defiant gaze a recurring theme in his paintings.

GRIEF-STRICKEN.
(AT LEFT) A photo of the real-life Sabel. (OPPOSITE PAGE) *Sabel in Grief*, 1981, 63 x 52 cm, oil on canvas.

"BenCab is the slum side of downtown, all the side streets with such Old Manila names as Sibakong, Ezpeleta, Misericordia, Trozo, and dearest of all...the Bambang neighborhood, where he grew up, among gray of tenement, black of *estero*, brown of dirt."

– Quijano de Manila in Philippines Free Press

Sabel was first noticed in BenCab's second one-man show held at the Luz Gallery in 1968. The city's underbelly at Bambang and Tondo was featured in street scenes in which the main characters are the scavengers, the homeless and the poor. Sabel was seen as one of these anonymous denizens of the streets; BenCab's canvases celebrated her as a commentary on the sufferings of the city's teeming, seething masses.

BenCab's eldest sister, in a recent interview, recounts a slightly different story. She remembers that Sabel was married and quite well-off, managing a small grocery in the neighborhood, in the house where she lived with her husband and daughters. Her problems started when her husband's gaze strayed to another woman. Sabel's mind was literally unhinged by her spouse's disloyalty.

Sabel began to wander aimlessly in the streets perpendicular to Avenida Rizal. She lost interest in her personal hygiene and appearance, defying her daughters' pleas for her to return home, before finally settling on a doorway across the Cabrera household. There she would squat for endless hours, swaddled in the scraps of plastic that she gathered and fashioned into makeshift clothes. Her daughters were able to convince her to go home a number of times for the requisite bath and change of clothes, but she would eventually find her way back to Bambang, to the spot across BenCab's home.

This is where the artist found her—an unlikely muse or anti-hero. He took pictures of Sabel in various poses—from across the street as she squatted in her favorite doorway or below his window while she spent hours looking into the distance, dancing to a tune that only she could hear.

Her family tried to get Sabel some medical attention, bringing her to the National Mental Hospital at one point. The doctors interviewed and examined her and their verdict was that she was normal. She answered all the questions correctly; she was not delusional. In modern terms, she had a case of major depression that made her unable to function in the light of her personal crisis. Since she refused to go home to her daughters, they had no choice but to leave her where she wanted to be.

Taking pity on Sabel, the Cabreras would fill the coconut shell that she carried as a makeshift bowl with some rice and viands, which she would eat, but she defied all entreaties to go home or take cover from the elements. Her daughters eventually got married and Sabel was finally alone. Because of her unorthodox fashion sense, the garbage collectors sometimes mistakenly carried her off because she liked sleeping near the garbage heaps at night, among the mounds of plastic cast away by the city residents.

Finally, one sad morning, Sabel's body was found lifeless—her mind, heart and body finally broken by years of deprivation—released finally from the personal exile that she had forced upon herself.

As the youngest of a large family composed mainly of sisters, BenCab was probably best equipped to paint this proud woman with requisite sensitivity and grace. The artist was able to see the beauty behind the dirt and scum, and paint Sabel as the human being beneath the assumed madwoman, an anonymous flotsam in a city that has grown tired of its own ugliness.

Some years ago, in an interview with the writer and art critic Cid Reyes, BenCab looked back and acknowledged the importance of Sabel and the *Scavenger* series in his career and growth: "Sabel was a real, flesh-and-blood person. I used to see her in the streets of Bambang, scavenging around garbage cans. She used to gather these plastic sheets and wrap them around her body. They made the most beautiful abstract shapes."

Aside from the painter's canvas, Sabel has also been immortalized in a dance production performed by Agnes Locsin at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in 1990. A new production called *Sayaw, Sabel,* organized by the Carmen D. Locsin Foundation, will be reprised by Agnes Locsin and other artists in two performances at the PETA Theater on June 26, 2010, followed by an invitation-only event at the Ayala

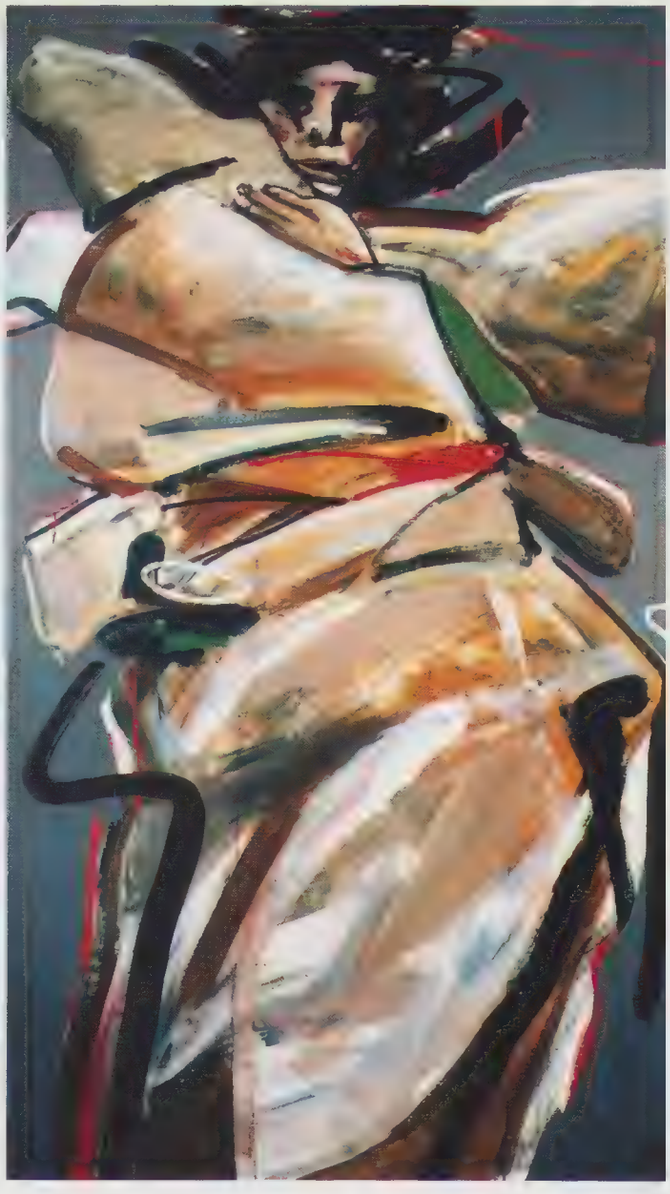
THE MANY FACES OF SABEL. (TOP TO BOTTOM) *Sabel* (unfinished study), 1980, 76 x 56 cm, acrylic on paper; *Sabel*, 2008, 91 x 107.5 cm, acrylic on canvas. (OPPOSITE PAGE) BenCab sitting in front of *32 Variations of Sabel* (painted on Mariwasa tiles).

Museum on July 18, 2010 and a nationwide tour throughout the month of July. The BenCab Museum in Baguio will likewise be the venue of one of the final performances in October 2010, with music by Louie Ocampo, Joey Ayala, Jakob Rodriguez and other OPM artists.

Sabel canvases are among the favorites of devoted BenCab collectors, whose numbers are legion. Her numerous moods, personas and the variations of her ragged costume and visage make Sabel an enchanting and beguiling subject.

Much has been said about Sabel, with many comparing her to Sisa, the deranged mother in Jose Rizal's novel *Noli Me Tangere*, who loses her young son to the depravity of the *Cura Párroco* ("parish priest") and his assistant and is reduced to her rags, making the rounds of San Diego and shouting out her children's names. She has been described as a "melancholic symbol of dislocation" embodying the state of the nation. BenCab acknowledges as much: "The social commentary will always be there. People will inevitably find meanings in your work, which you never intended. To comment on the social situation of our country is not the reason why I paint."

This vagrant woman is one of the best-known muses of BenCab's storied career. In her plainness, he saw beauty; in her anonymity, he saw an individual person who chose to live as she saw fit; in her weakness, he saw her native wit and strength. It is a tribute to BenCab that what he saw, what he painted, are what endure.



SCAVENGER'S TALE.
(FROM LEFT) *Sabel*, 1968, 42 x 35 cm, ink and acrylic on board; *Triptych on Sabel 1*, 1993, 183 x 122 cm, acrylic on canvas.

Jun Impas

Florentino "Jun" Impas is an award-winning artist based in Cebu, but whose acclaim extends well beyond its shores. Recognition for Impas's works – a vivid world of earth-bound beauty as seen in the lives of people in their daily routines – have come in steadily since winning the grand prize in the Trauma Painting Contest in 2003.

More recognition came the following year as he claimed the top prizes of both the Martino Abella on-the-spot painting contest and the Petron Lumang Ani, Bagong Sali Art Competition. In the same year, he was also a finalist at the GSIS Painting Competition. He considers 2008 a banner year as he stepped into the international arena and garnered an Excellent Award in the China Youth ASEAN Art Competition. His most recent awards include Second Prize at the 2009 GSIS Painting Competition.

To learn more about the artist, and to see his works – on wide range of genres, from still life, landscapes and portraiture – visit his online gallery at www.junimpas.com.

HIS EMINENCE RICARDO J. CARDINAL VIDAL 30 x 40 in., oil on canvas

Clockwise: MRS. NORMA LIU, 30 x 40 in., oil on canvas; ATTY. AND MRS. MARIO ORTIZ, 36 x 48 in., oil on canvas; GOV. GWENDOLIN GARCIA, 30 x 40 in., oil on canvas; CHIEF JUSTICE RENATO CORONA, 30 x 40 in., oil on canvas; Mrs. Meynet Camaña, 30 x 40 in., oil on canvas; ATTY. AUGUSTO GO, 30 x 40 in., oil on canvas

TEXT BY CID REYES

Slums and Altars

National Artist Vicente Manansala's foray into the urban heart of Manila takes him on a journey through life's hardships, as the artist questions the poor conditions of his countrymen and seeks answers in the divine.

"I am not an intellectual. I am a peasant. I do not paint from the mind. I paint from the heart."

Thus thundered the late National Artist Vicente S. Manansala (1910-1981) in a long-ago interview with this writer. The aforesaid statement succinctly captures the artist's personal sentiment, which—as evidenced by his early works in the 1950s—was already sensitive and sympathetic to the plight of his underprivileged countrymen. Several simultaneous shows—*Images of the Nation: Vicente Manansala as Social Realist* at the Ayala Museum, *Si Mang Enteng...Encountering Manansala* at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila and *Mga Gawa ni Mang Enteng* at the GSIS Museum—draws attention to the master's empathetic portrayal of Philippine society. Now viewed half a century later, Manansala's works serve as a timely reflection on the largely unchanged conditions of Philippine contemporary life. The recent election was an accurate barometer since all presidential platforms addressed the pressing problem of poverty: *Tapusin ang Kahirapan* (Let's Put an End To Poverty), *Kung Walang* Corrupt *Walang Mahirap* (No Corruption, No Poverty), *Mas Mabilis na Pag-ahon* (Rise up from Poverty).

IMAGES COURTESY OF AYALA MUSEUM

Manansala emerged in the art scene after World War II, with fellow artists Hernando R. Ocampo (1911-1978), Cesar T. Legaspi (1917-1994), Victor Sta. Maria Oteyza (1913-1979), Ramon A. Estela (1911-1991) and Romeo V. Tabuena (born 1926). Together they formed the core group of post-war artists whom the critic E. Aguilar Cruz labeled the "Neo-Realists". H.R. Ocampo, who turned out to be the intellectual of the group (he was a fiction writer, a poet, an editor and advertising man) justified the term to mean that they were creating "a new kind of reality." In time, Neo-Realists would be replaced by the term "Modernists," when their works would be compared with the works of the so-called "Conservatives" who upheld the traditional pictorial values of Fernando Amorsolo.

Understandably, the devastation wrought by the war (1941-44) ravaged the economy and brought suffering to masses of Filipinos. Hunger and misery stalked the metropolis which now lay in ruins even as the homeless struggled to raise a roof over their heads and lived in makeshift dwellings that came to be known as the *barong-barong*. Workers and peasants struggled to make a living in an impoverished landscape of loss and despair. Long after peace was restored, this was still the nightmare vision that haunted the Neo-Realists. The war and its aftermath were the emotional and artistic stimulus expressed visually in the canvases of Manansala, Ocampo and Legaspi.

The Birth of Social Realism

As their choice of subject matter was the abject social condition of the masses, their works would be classified under the rubrics of Social Realism; as a movement, its origin is ascribed to the works of the 19th century painter Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), which depicted scenes ranging from rigorous labor to a peasant funeral. The life struggles of the working class became the driving focus of Social Realism.

H.R. Ocampo, for instance, painted images of desolation in works entitled *Ina ng Balon* and *Calvary*, a crucifixion of figures against a landscape of soot-belching, towering chimneys. Socially critical themes also heightened the emotional temper of Cesar Legaspi, as evident in his works entitled *The Beggars*, *The Diggers* and *Gadgets*, the last being an indictment of how the Machine Age reduces man to a mere cog in the industrial wheel. Another painting entitled *Stairway* is a mute testimony to the horrors of the war. Standing amidst the rubble is a derelict stone stairway leading to an empty gray sky.

For both Ocampo and Legaspi, however, social realist subjects would be a short-lived phase. Evolving into a more mature development, Ocampo totally forsook figuration in favor of abstraction. Legaspi's quest for significant form retained the human torso and explored the configuration of its biomorphic and dynamic shapes.

As though keeping the faith, only Manansala remained steadfast to the tenets of Social Realism till the end of his days. Like the many thousands who were rendered homeless by the destruction of Manila, Manansala had known poverty. In the Commemorative Folio on National Artists, the critic Rod Paras-Perez wrote: "In

QUIAPO VENDORS.
(AT LEFT) *Candle Vendor with Child*, 1977, 66 x 48.5 cm, oil on canvas. (OPPOSITE PAGE) *Balut Vendor*, 1973, 59.5 x 85 cm, oil on canvas.

his youth, Manansala painted insects: dragonflies, June bugs, butterflies. Even cockroaches, for these were models most accessible to him at Intramuros. On Calle Real where his family settled from Macabebe, Pampanga, the rooms were a constricted world reeking with the smell of centuries. He was barely past seven. Soon he was old enough to become a bootblack, a newsboy, a caddy and a distributor of programs in movie houses. He did everything with eagerness, except being a newsboy because he lost his voice hawking. A happy afternoon meant walking atop the beveled fence of San Agustin church. Or making his own toys because he was too poor to buy any. He made his kites and flew them on top of the *muelle de la muralla*."

Indeed, poverty continually hounded Manansala. After the UNESCO art fellowship that brought him to the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Canada in 1945, and in the following year, through a nine-month scholarship funded by the French government to attend the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, he returned to his country to present new works. Continued Paras-Perez: "Yet in as late as 1951, Manansala trudged home to his *barong-barong* on Callejon Reina from Manila Hotel where he had an exhibit, jaws firmly set and almost in tears because few understood his works and fewer still cared to buy them…It was a sad denouement to his sojourn in Paris, the city that raised an artist's hopes."

The *barong-barong* (squatter shacks or urban shanties) had become an iconic symbol of the poverty-stricken Filipino. To this day, tragically, thousands of our people still live in these helter-skelter dwellings comprised of rusty corrugated tin roofs and wooden clapboards, cobbled together to create, if not a crumbling home, at least a shelter from the cruel elements. In fact, in 1950, for a painting of a *barong-barong*, Manansala had won First Prize in a contest sponsored by the Art Association of the Philippines. His talent for painting was early augured in 1940, when he also won First Prize for a work entitled *Pounding Rice* in the National Exhibition (Filipiniana Division), sponsored by the University of Santo Tomas.

Alas, however, the Filipino artist—for all his critical recognition—had not much to show by way of material rewards. It's no wonder then that he was denounced by society as *hampaslupa* (scum of the earth), according to AAP founder Purita Kalaw Ledesma.

Manansala's Influences and Inspirations

Manansala was, first and foremost, an artist, and his social consciousness had, perforce, to find an equivalent aesthetic rage and grace, if his art were to serve its function as art and not merely as social propaganda. Indicative of this awareness was his expressed admiration for the works of the artist Ben Shahn, a Lithuanian-born American, regarded as "the most committed social critic among American artists of the day and who continued the tradition of the Ashcan School." At the turn of the last century, a group of American artists attempted to emancipate themselves from the influential grip of European painting. The nickname "Ashcan" refers to the sordid life of the city, especially in New York. American Social Realism was largely triggered by the economic upheaval of the Great Depression in the 1930s.

To have actually listened to Manansala's highly enthusiastic reminiscing was to viscerally partake of those halcyon years, those moments of epiphany. Declared Manansala in the vernacular: "*Hindi ako masyadong mahilig sa mga* American painters. *Bueno, si* Ben Shahn *gusto ko.* He's a light painter, but I like his work. *Yung ginagawa nya, gusto ko ring gawin eh. Yung merong nakahiga sa* park, *merong bata, gula-gulanit ang damit, nasa* ruins—*yung ganoon. Siguro dahil doon kaya ko gusto si* Ben Shahn. *Nakita ko yung* one-man show *niya sa* Tokyo *noong* Expo '70. *Talagang na-*impress *ako. Nakakita ka na ba ng* original *na* Ben Shahn? *Yung* casein, *ha, patong-patong. Pero kitang-kita mo ang pagka-*brilliant *ng kulay. Bilib ako eh. Ang* approach *eh, kuwan,*

mararamdaman mo." ("I'm not really fond of American painters. Well, I like Ben Shahn. He's a light painter, but I like his work. I would like to imitate what he does. People lying in the park, kids with tattered clothes, at the ruins—that sort. Maybe that's why I like Ben Shahn. I saw his one man show at the Tokyo Expo '70. I was really impressed. Have you ever seen an original Ben Shahn? The casein, it was in layers, but you can still see the brilliance of the colors. I was impressed. The approach, well, you could feel it.") (Writer's note: No translation in English can quite capture the bite, flavor and sizzle of these talks. *Mang* Enteng, as Manansala was popularly addressed, spoke in a passionate and excitable manner, accompanied by emphatic gestures, and energized by his sheer enthusiasm for the subject at hand.)

It is not certain when Manansala had first seen the works of Ben Shahn—in book reproductions, to be sure. But what can be deduced, in hindsight, is that Manansala's iconic *Madonna of the Slums*, painted in 1950, was rendered with graphic, illustrational touches, such as were evident in the style of Ben Shahn. This should not be surprising, however, as the artist had already worked as an illustrator right after the war for the *Philippines Herald*. Then, in succession came the equally masterful works, *Jeepneys* and *Dambana*, both in the Ateneo Art Gallery collection and bequeathed by Manansala's friend, the artist Fernando Zobel.

Together with the jeepney, the altar, or *dambana*, was a symbol of Filipino religiosity, the sacred place where the masses seek sanctuary in all kinds of turmoil, often emotional, but mostly financial. This is reflective of Filipino spirituality that rests all problems and anxieties on the Almighty, whom our pagan ancestors addressed as Bathala. Indeed, the expression *Bahala Na* alludes to the Almighty as the answer to all the people's prayers. (The English translation, "Tomorrow will take care of itself" totally leaves the Almighty out of the picture.)

As *Jeepneys* was rendered in the medium of enamel, so was *Dambana*. In the

ORDINARY ORDEALS.
(ABOVE) *Candle Vendors*, 1975, 29 x 24.3 cm, watercolor. (BELOW) *Pila sa Bigas*, 1980, 137.16 x 213.36 cm, oil on canvas. (OPPOSITE PAGE) *Beggars*, 1975, 72 x 85 cm, oil on canvas.

In the eyes of Manansala, Social Realism was viewed with truth and accuracy, a lyrical fervor and a brightened palette.

– Cid Reyes

1950s, Filipino artists had a penchant for using enamel, an ordinary, cheap house paint, but valued precisely for its sticky viscosity. Both paintings were rendered in a loosely expressionistic manner, tinged with grim touches of acerbic colors and, expectedly, dolorous blacks. While no distinct figures can even be gleaned from these two works, they are not immune from the effluvium of poverty and want.

Since the mid-50s, Cubistic impulses started to manifest themselves in the works of Manansala, especially in the trademark faceting of planes and the geometricizing of volumes. These, too, were deduced from Pablo Picasso, a Spaniard, and Georges Braque, a Frenchman who invented Cubism, whose basic ideas were derived from Cezanne's implicit teaching that "the painter ought to look for the cone, the sphere, and the cylinder in nature." A derisive term, Cubism was influenced by "Negro" sculpture, an art in the round occupying a three-dimensional space.

Thus when Manansala explored a variety of subjects that depicted the social conditions of the people, he chose

SAFE IN MOTHER'S ARMS. (AT RIGHT) *Mother and Child*, 1973, 56.5 x 74.5 cm, oil on canvas. (TOP) *Reclining Mother and Child*, 1967, 56.9 x 119.4 cm, oil on wood. (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM) *Mother & Child*, 1981, 54.3 x 55.5 cm, oil on canvas; *Pila sa Bigas*, 1975, 99 x 83 cm, oil on canvas.

representative images: *sabungeros* (cockfight aficionados), beggars, scavengers, candle vendors, fish vendors, and a variety of market scenes. Even the traditional Mother and Child, of which Manansala did several versions, was imbued with incredible poignancy, but delivering as well the message of life's hardships. It is worth recalling that Manansala held a deep admiration, in particular, for Picasso's "Blue Period" works when he painted the miseries of the human condition. Works such as *Destitute Woman*, *The Woman Ironing*, *The Old Guitarist*, all bathed in monochrome blues, evoke Picasso's compassion for society's outcasts.

In like manner, Manansala conveyed a similarly powerful pathos in two specific works: *Pila Sa Bigas* and *Give Us This Day*. The first is a brusquely candid portrayal of women, ironically in seeming procession, falling in line to receive their daily sustenance of rice. Of his works, art chronicler Manuel Duldulao remarked: "His sense of romanticism was too strong to let go in favor of a restricted palette. On the whole, his romantic leaning burst forth in expressions of vivacity, unabashed gaiety and luminous colors...In *Pila sa Bigas*, Manansala's romantic streak becomes even more pronounced: he used a lively palette on a subject that could easily have fallen into the unrelieved somber and gloomy colors of extreme anxiety." Painted in 1980, this work does correspond with Duldulao's assessment, but there is an extant, earlier work, dated 1958, of the same subject, *Pila-Pila,* that can only be described as Ben Shahnesque, all ashen greys and emaciated figures.

Lending a shiver of poignancy to *Give Us This Day* (in the Central Bank collection) is the fact that it was painted a few months before Manansala's death in 1981. Incontrovertibly a masterpiece of Social Realism, this painting is a synthesis of many elements: a felicity of subject matter, spirituality merging gently with an unvarnished depiction of provincial simplicity, a self-contained reality replete with domestic still life, the subtle grace of motherhood, and an interior space richly faceted into planes of light.

In the eyes of Manansala, Social Realism was viewed with truth and accuracy, a lyrical fervor and a brightened palette, as if in so doing, the artist proffered a hopeful hand, by itself a real connection with the lives of his people.

Artistic *idiosyncrasy*

From painting, comics, to curation, Jose Tence Ruiz's varied art personalities clamor for the spotlight.

TEXT BY ANTARES GOMEZ BARTOLOME
PHOTOGRAPHS BY STAN ONG

The art world has long been known for its personalities. Weirdos, maniacs and geniuses dominate the popular perception of the artistic milieu. In fact, it isn't uncommon to hear the term "artist" used to explain away hang-ups, eccentricities and other peculiar quirks short of apoplexy.

The artistic penchant for outlandish behavior does have its perks. Many artists have secured prominent positions in the popular imagination by virtue of their idiosyncrasy. Vincent Van Gogh sliced off an earlobe. Salvador Dalí referred to himself in the third person, wore a cape, and of course, insisted on that awful mustache. And the-artist-formerly-known-as-Prince…well, let's just say he earned that ellipsis.

Apart from mismatched coffee mugs, transporting his works in a pink NGO truck and having only one ashtray, that's as weird as Jose "Bogie" Tence Ruiz gets. Bogie drinks instant coffee, doesn't consume too much alcohol or smoke and according to his daughter, secretly loves *Glee*. The one thing that makes him an artist is the fact that he does his work. He doesn't slack or brag. That he does his art well is because he's enjoyed it enough to keep it up. "*Wala talagang* substitute *sa disiplina*," Bogie says. ("There isn't really a substitute for discipline.")

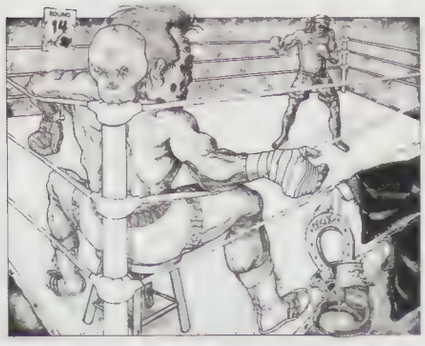
No Escape from Reality

Bogie lives with his wife, Rochit, and their two children Spike and Amihan, but the common spaces of the house have the distinction of appearing like his personal warehouse. Paintings are stacked against the living room walls, the corridors and even against the staircase. We sit down to coffee at a dining table that used to serve as the bed that he and his wife slept on for most of the 80s. Above us hangs a Styrofoam spin-off of the SM Shoemart logo with

THE DANCE OF LIFE.
(ABOVE) *Signorina Marina*, 2009, 122 x 183 cm, oil on primed linen. (OPPOSITE PAGE) Jose Tence "Bogie" Ruiz, photographed at his home and studio.

ARTWORK PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOSE TENCE RUIZ

THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE.
(ABOVE) *Si Erding Erdrayb at ang kanyang Palasyong Agaw-tanaw*, 1980, mixed media. (BELOW) An editorial cartoon illustrated by Bogie.



the letters "SR" for Social Realism, the movement under whose broad ambit Bogie's work is classified and advocated most notably by the Kaisahan group of artists (founded in 1976), which Bogie joined in 1978 while still a student at the University of Santo Tomas.

His body of work—everything from his magazine illustrations, paintings, sculptures and performances from the late 70s onward—shows that Bogie has stuck to his guns. In keeping with the manifesto of the Kaisahan group ("To the building of a humane and just society for all."), Bogie attests, "I am a great lover of formalism, formal creativity and new media and technical innovation, but I have never allowed these to be the sole component of whatever I wanted to say in my work. This always had to be coupled with a comprehensive picture of the now, of the time I was in, as this was always what art had to be—a creative personal depiction of the times one was in."

While he admits that Social Realism is seen by many as a dated "generational practice," Bogie thinks it is only part of the cycle that sons come to slay their fathers. "My goal in the present is to rethink what I believe is a very broad-based practice and give it currency, a contemporary relevance, a nuance suited to 2010 and not wallowing in nostalgia for the radical 70s."

FOOD FOR THOUGHT.
Handa was a collaborative work by Bogie and 16 artists to commemorate the People Power Revolution.

During most of the interview, Bogie is working on the initial outlines of a painting from the *Kotillion* series, which he began in 2008. The figure he's working on is dressed in a multitude of cărcasses while holding a shepherd's staff. For the most part, the paintings present cotillion dresses as metaphors for the excessive practices of a bloated aristocracy and their hangers-on—luxury that is built on the toil of the working classes. To top it all off, Bogie argues, it is in their fierce defense of their lifestyles that they choose to oppose the creation of a more equitable society. The other images are packed with details and clues denoting public figures and historical events, the references for which Bogie largely draws from the countless dailies stacked around the house as well as the enormous stash of books that lines his studio.

He is interested in everything, it seems, and in between painting and the interview, Bogie pulls up an archive of images taken from the web. It's a mixture of flashy fashion shots, documentary photography, absurd comic strips, anatomical écorchés, ruins, kitschy spreads and even zeppelins. "I get something from everywhere," he says. "I gave something for the Ayala museum's *El Prado Project* recently. I told them I'd never done a direct interpretation of any of those masters but the influence and the connection is definitely there. When someone paints, they draw from all of the painters they've ever liked. *Di ko naman mapako sarili ko* ("I can't pin myself down."). Why should you consciously look for a style? Think of something to say and you'll end up saying it. It should work itself out."

Interestingly enough, Bogie's habit of drawing insight from diverse sources as well as his near-faith in serendipity have helped develop his work, particularly in terms of collaborations with other artists. In 1988, Bogie was named as one of the Cultural Center of the Philippines' (CCP) Thirteen Artists. For that exhibition, he gathered a number of artists and requested them to contribute a food item for a fiesta commemorating the People Power Revolt two years prior. The collection of works, which some take as Bogie's first foray into curation, was presented as a table spread at the CCP exhibition.

The artists' contributions were invariably grim. What had begun as an attempt to present a broad array of interpretations resulted in a concentrated manifestation of disquiet. Blood-filled *siopaos*, muddy punch and other gory viands confronted the audience with a sense that people were not too happy despite having overthrown the Marcoses. Bogie's contribution was comprised of stones half-transmuted into *pan de sal*—an aborted miracle. It had only been a year since the Mendiola Massacre and they were underwhelmed by the Aquino administration's performance, to say the least.

To Dust, To Worship: Vocation Enough?

When talking about being a curator, Bogie prefers to base his relationship with artists on mutual trust. "Maybe you can give people a theme to work on but really, the best I can do is hope that a show turns out well." Bogie laments that organizing shows this way can be difficult and sometimes depressing. But this is the toll taken by caring too much, which for him is what a curator should do, a frame of mind he picked up from Ana Labrador in an article she wrote for *TransIt*, a publication Bogie helped produce in the 90s. Bogie remarks that the root word of curate means 'to care,' but he believes that it's more than just a sort of custodianship. "Ana Lab's put it best when she said that a curator has to be someone with *pagmamalasakit* (deep sympathy)."

Bogie's first curating assignment was in November 1996. Hearing he was back from Singapore, Brenda Fajardo, then curator of the Vargas Museum, asked him to put together a show focusing on Philippine editorial cartoons. "The museum was working on the smallest of budgets then. Some curators are happy to sit there dusting the collection. Brenda wanted to improve the museum, to expand it past just being the repository of Jorge Vargas memorabilia." Seeing it as a chance

"Why should you consciously look for a style? Think of something to say and you'll end up saying it. It should work itself out." **– *Jose Tence Ruiz***

ICONOGRAPHY.
(TOP TO BOTTOM) *Dalagang Bukid 1*, 2009, 122 x 122 cm, oil on canvas; Coffee with Bogie. Behind him is a series on famous (and infamous) personalities such as Cory Aquino, Jovito Palparan, Manny Pacquiao and Adolf Hitler.

to boost what he saw as a diminished practice in more ways than one, Bogie happily accepted a small fee and took on the project.

In his view, the quality of Philippine editorial cartoons was down; art directors and cartoonists were slacking off and sticking to safe formulas in terms of both form and content. Bogie felt something had to be done. "*Putangina, hanggang ganito na lang ba 'to?* ("Sonofabitch, is this it?") Even komiks was dead," he said, noting the disappearance of the Atlas and GASI (Graphic Arts Services, Inc.) presses, which produced most of early Pinoy *komiks*. "I knew all their numbers, so I called them. Neil Doloricon, DengCoy Miel, Nonoy Marcelo…there were seven of us." The show was titled *Pasyon at Ilustrasyon* after Rey Ileto's book *Pasyon at Rebolusyon*.

In line with Social Realism, Bogie felt compelled to help "improve visual culture on a broad level and print, as popular media…needed a push." For Bogie, curation provided an avenue for such an effort. "As a practitioner myself, I saw curation as being about organizing practice on a larger scale." Aside from putting shows together to showcase promising artists, Bogie puts considerable weight on facilitating an exchange of ideas among artists, critics and their audiences. "It should be about building communities according to a vision of critical thinking," he asserts. "You can come from diametrically opposed perspectives, but you still have to be able to talk."

Bogie believes that our sense of community should also be based on identity and that our art institutions need to do more to promote this. "Hardly anyone was using our institutions positively," he says, pointing to the National Museum as an example. "At one point, their collection, the way it was presented…well, you could hardly call it a collection. It was more of an assortment. Cora Alvina and Patrick Flores helped make sense of things, arranging the collection so that one could understand how these objects were important to Philippine history, to shared experience. Again, you really have to care."

Ironically, despite the earnestness of his approach to curation, Bogie has always been wary of using the term. He prefers to say that an exhibition was "cobbled or slapped together" instead of "curated". "I just don't have that snob appeal and have never approached it that way," he says. "I don't have a lot of letters before my name. I think that maybe I'm just one of the guys that the 'doctors' tolerate. My best offer is to allow people to work with others they respect, to promise people a good exhibition. It's also hard when you have to compete with

prestige-conferring bodies like Philip Morris or Metrobank to get the artists' best work. Stress *talaga*." After his recent show at Finale, Bogie wants to focus on his practice. He's booked for shows until 2014 and it'll be some time before he curates another exhibition. I ask him if it has been worth it so far. "There was never enough money all the time. But yeah, it was worth it."

May Your Hands Always Be Busy

I ask Bogie whether he knows what he's going to do for all the shows he's got lined up. "I have no idea. I really have no idea what I'll be like by then," he says, looking at the painting he's working on. "But," he begins as he gets up and shows me several large notebooks packed with sketches, "I've literally got dozens and dozens of these just waiting to be executed. So in a few years, I'm gonna look at these and if something's still worth doing, I'll do it." The idea of coming up blank is apparently not a problem. "I'm not at a loss for what to do. I'm at a loss for time."

Considering everything, Bogie's work ethic is enough to put anyone to shame. "I've never recovered from my years working with media," he says, recalling his time as an art director and illustrator for numerous magazines and dailies. Through years of late nights and keeping multiple jobs between his first summer as an assistant and his term with *Singapore Straits Times*, Bogie has made a sport of chasing deadlines. "If I look back at it, I might say I wish I were more of the cool and laid-back guy, but I'm not." He says he finds it ridiculous when people sit around scratching their heads when a deadline's coming. "*Pukpukan 'yun, eh. Dapat game ka.*" ("That's crunch time. You have to be ready.")

Through all of it, Bogie keeps up his practice as a multi-media artist. "Of course, you have to like what you're doing," he admits, because for Bogie, the enjoyment outweighed the pay. Looking back at how his first one-man show at Pinaglabanan Gallery didn't sell at all, Bogie recounts how the following years weren't pieces of cake either. "My rate of failure was enough to break the spirit of most people. Thankfully, it's improved."

Bogie's never had a manager, though he once asked his wife, who declined. "I was too much of a coward to present my work. Maybe I was too egotistical to risk rejection. Even now, when people ask me if I have a website, I just tell them to google me and judge from there. I'm not one of those guys who manages his own PR. I might just end up believing it," he says. "So if someone out there says that 'Tence Ruiz is a shit,' well, it's out there. But hopefully they'll also see my work. And if a stranger hires me for ten times what I used to make, then maybe I'm not doing such a bad thing."

"I do my best to deal in defaults," Bogie says. When I ask if 'default' is the right word, he replies, "What I do is work. There are times when I have to blow off friends or miss their openings because I'm working. We have to accept that, before anything, this is what we do. I enjoy a beer more when I know I've done something, when I know I'm someone who's at least worth having a beer with."

THE CABALLEROS.
(BELOW) *Kabalyero sa Puwang ng Gabi't Takipsilim* is a painting of the late Fernando Poe, Jr. (OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT TO RIGHT) Complementing the FPJ painting is one of former President Estrada called *Kabalyero sa Dalampasigan sa Tabing na Bughaw*; Bogie said there are five stages to his painting. These works are still at their initial stages.

Quiet Poetry

TEXT BY RINGO BUNOAN

The Robert Chabet Archive maps the musings and meditations of the Philippines' foremost conceptual artist.

The first time I saw a work of Chabet was at West Gallery in Quezon City when I was a freshman at the UP College of Fine Arts. Back then, the gallery was on the ground floor and when I arrived, the place was packed. I remember the works were mostly black plywood panels on the walls. I distinctly recall the red neon, for it was the only color in the whole show. There was also a red crowbar. I don't remember the other details, just the feeling—like a crack in the night.

It is impossible to discuss Philippine contemporary art without Roberto Chabet. One of the most influential artists of the post-war generation, he broke away from the rigid Modernism of the late 1960s and developed a more inclusive approach to conceptual art, a search for the sublime, not in abstract ideas but in the immediacy of the commonplace and everyday. Using mostly readymade materials, he has created highly allegorical installations, sculptures, paintings, collages, and drawings that question fixed notions about art, meaning and modernity. They are meditations on space, the transitory nature of everyday objects and the collisions that occur with their displacement.

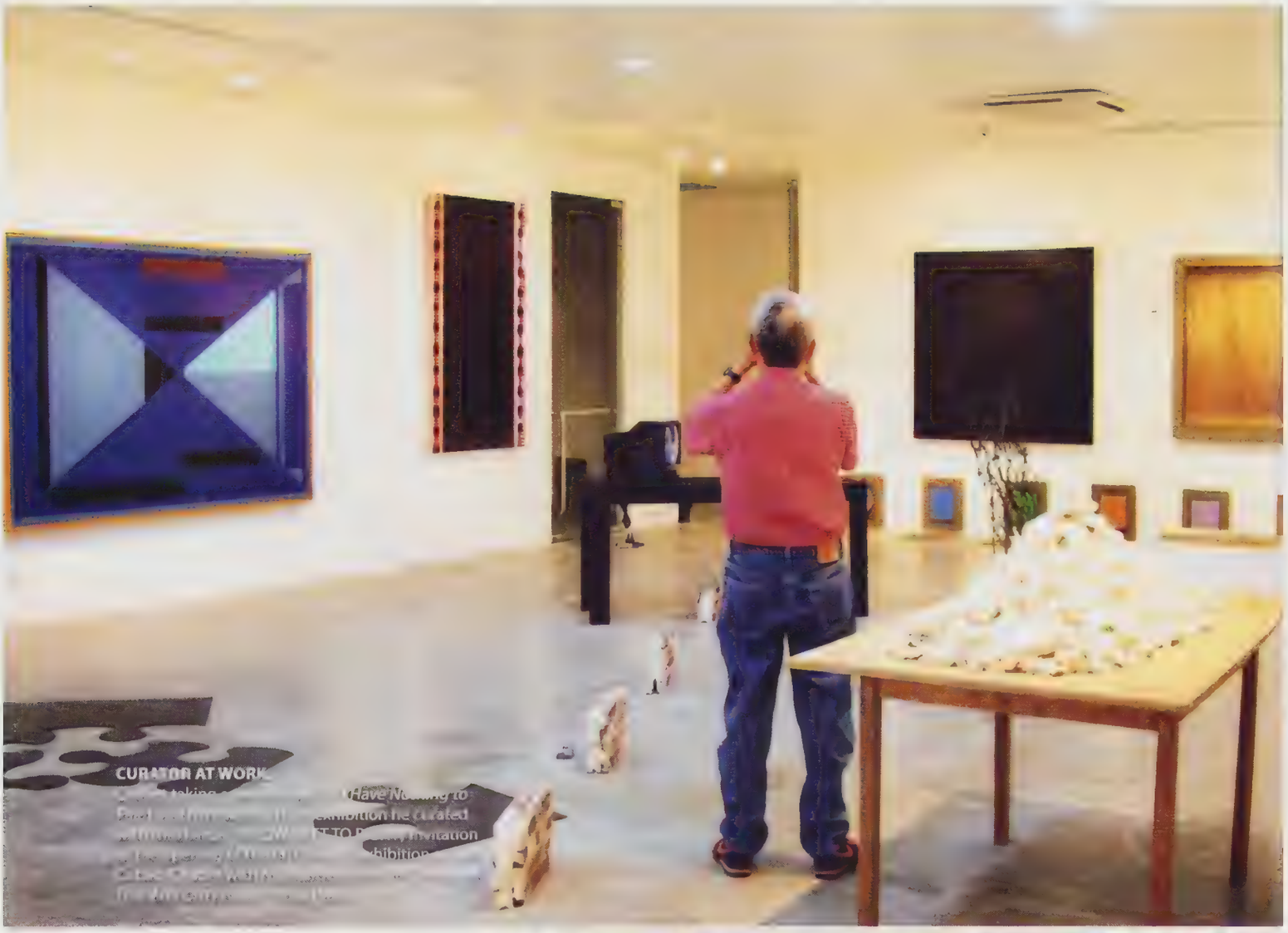
Chabet studied Architecture at the University of Santo Tomas where he graduated in 1961. He had his first solo exhibition at the Luz Gallery in the same year. He was the founding Museum Director of the CCP from 1967-1970 where he initiated the first Thirteen Artists Awards, giving recognition to young artists whose works "show a recentness, a turning away from the past and familiar modes of art-making." He led the 1970s conceptual art group Shop 6 and taught for over 30 years at the UP College of Fine Arts. Since the 1970s, he has also been organizing landmark exhibitions featuring vanguard works by his students at UP, many of whom are among the most active and innovative emerging artists in the Philippines today. He is the recipient of the 1972 Republic Cultural Heritage Award, the 1972 Araw ng Maynila Award for the Visual Arts and the 1998 Centennial Honor for the Arts.

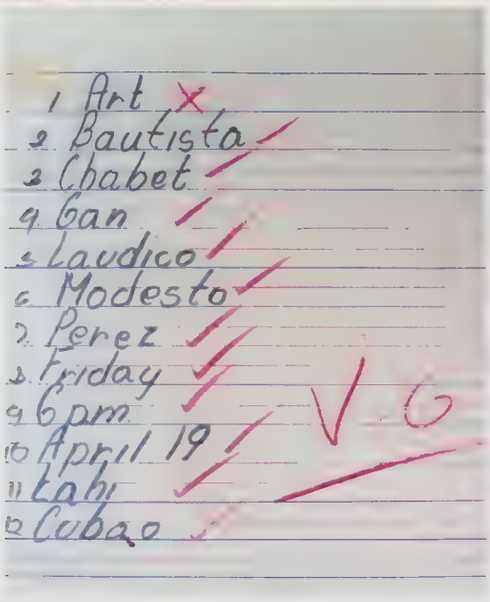
PHOTOS COURTESY OF RINGO BUNOAN AND THE LOPEZ MEMORIAL MUSEUM

In July 2009, the Asia Art Archive and the Lopez Memorial Museum launched The Roberto Chabet Archive, a milestone project which has put together and digitized over 8,000 documents—photographs, notes, letters, sketches, catalogues, brochures, invitations, videos, and clippings—covering nearly 50 years of work by the Philippines' foremost conceptual artist. From his first solo exhibition at the Luz Gallery in 1961 to his most recent exhibition at Mag: net Gallery in April 2009, the Chabet Archive is an unprecedented mapping of the artist's body of work and his unparalleled contributions to Philippine art. The research is the point of entry into the understanding of Chabet's vision of art and his impact on the development of the art scene in the Philippines.

In the beginning, Chabet was unsurprisingly hesitant since archiving is

BURST OF COLORS.
(TOP TO BOTTOM) *Mountain with Rainbow* (*China Collage* series), 1982 to 1985; *Orange Landscape*, 1961, 64.5 x 95 cm, oil on board. (OPPOSITE PAGE) *10000 Paintings I Must Paint Before I Die*, 2009, acrylic on clipboards, neon.

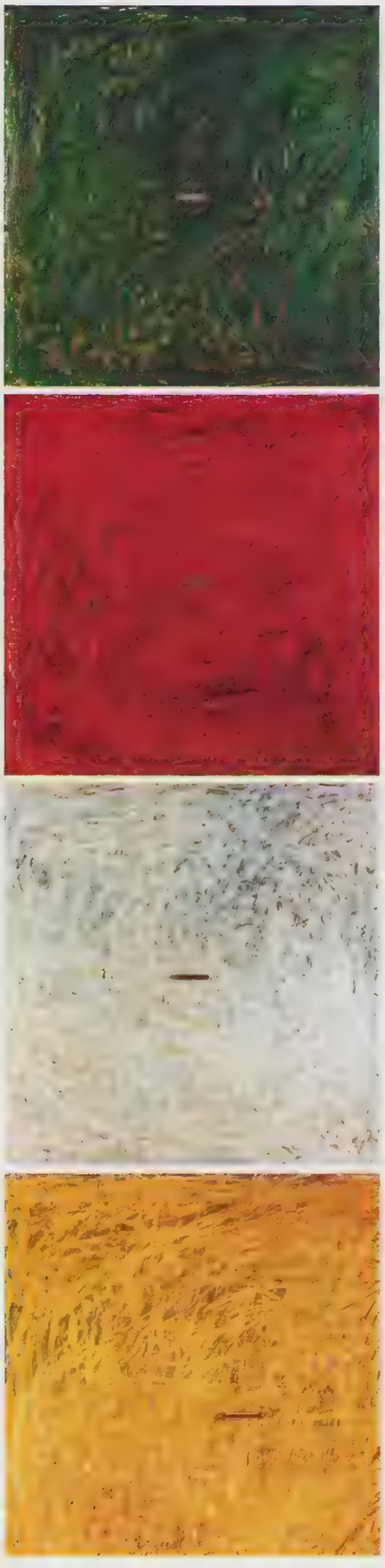




a long and tedious process that compels us to summon forth old, distant memories, some of which we may have already totally forgotten, and maybe some we prefer to forget. Little by little though, he started to give me his albums of pictures for scanning. These albums were like portals back into time. I am completely fascinated by them.

All these old snapshots were of another era, the '60s and the early '70s. I was too young to experience and was only witnessing through pictures the time of the Luz Gallery, the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) and Shop 6; the '80s and early '90s at UP, galleries like Sining Kamalig, Brix, Pinaglabanan, Finale at Sunvar, and West.

There is a picture of Chabet with his students Bert Antonio, Nilo Ilarde and Gerry Tan outside West Gallery; it looked so different then, almost idyllic, maybe it was the light of the old photos. Some of the albums had more recent pictures, exhibitions that I saw and was a part of. This was during the '90s at the SM Megamall Art Center. There were also shows



One of the most influential artists of the post-war generation, Chabet broke away from the rigid modernism of the late 1960s and developed a more inclusive approach to conceptual art.

at CCP and West Gallery. I learned that the first Chabet exhibition I saw there was called *Other Planets* in 1993.

Images and objects would re-appear throughout the years—the plywood, the neon, the shelves with their metal brackets, the crowbar, the boat, the parachute, the drum, the harmonica, the tables, the mirrors, the cane, the clipboards, the maps—Chabet's inventory of anxious objects waiting to collide. Ronald Achacoso, one of Chabet's former students at UP, summed it up in the recent notes he wrote for Chabet's exhibition last year:

"The familiar array of objects and assemblages that make up Chabet's terse but distinct visual language…act as cryptic signposts that cross reference the diverse elements and cue us into the quiet poetry of his perplexing constructs and understated romanticist streak behind the conceptualist trappings. An alchemical synthesis of myth, memory, history from which we can behold the magnificent and the marvelous veiled behind the humdrum of everyday life."

Sometimes in between these pictures, there would be some letters. I felt like a voyeur reading them. Some were official correspondences between Chabet and CCP; some were personal letters from Fernando Zobel and Arturo Luz and from his students Francesca Enriquez and Gerry Tan. Chabet also wrote notes to his exhibitions and those that he curated. His writing was lucid, his choice of words were resonant, metaphorical, poetic—not unlike his manner of working with space, objects and images. He wrote numerous press releases and texts for other artists. He was really one of the biggest supporters of young, vanguard art.

Noted Filipino art critic Alice Guillermo wrote that Roberto Chabet's works carry their own memories and he is only their custodian. Now that I have created his archive, I take on the pleasure and privilege of recording and passing on his memories, his story. The Chabet Archive is not the culmination of this project, but rather a starting point for further dialogue and sharing.

The Roberto Chabet Archive is available for public consultation at the Asia Art Archive (*www.aaa.org.hk*) in Hong Kong and the Lopez Memorial Museum. (*www.lopezmuseum.org.ph*) in Manila.

ABSTRACT IDEAS.
(ABOVE) Chabet's series, *Four Directions - 4 pieces*, 1999, oil on canvas. (AT RIGHT) *Rocky Landscape I*, 1960, 48 x 66 cm, watercolor on chipboard.

The Sacred Feminine

From Inscapes to archetypes, sculptor Agnes Arellano channels cycles of life, death, desire and neuroses in the female figure, merging mind, body and spirit into a single, monumental form.

TEXT BY PATRICIA RECTO TUMANG **PHOTOGRAPHS BY** MEDS MEDINA

Agnes Arellano hated confessing about fornication. The ritual of purging one's guilt about desire and sex felt oppressive, akin to being branded with a Scarlet Letter. Growing up in a religious household demanded that Arellano obey strict Roman Catholic doctrines: sex for reproduction, not for pleasure, and for married couples only, not for a single Filipina coming of age in the era of free love, hippies, and Vietnam War protest. "You lose your virginity so how can you go back every week confessing to the priest that you fornicated again? It's like making a mockery of confession," Arellano explains.

This feeling of having her sexuality boxed in was what compelled Arellano to begin exploring tantric eroticism and female archetypes in sculpture. Since the early 1980s, when she began her career as a sculptor, Arellano has been praised for her masterpieces called Inscapes, a term borrowed from Gerard Manley Hopkins' poetry to describe the visual representation of an artist's interior landscape. Arellano's works are doorways into a realm of fantasy, frolic, and tactile exploration; viewers enter the large-scale sculptures and merge with the environment, rather than keeping at a distance. The juxtaposition of opposite worlds allows viewers to simultaneously experience fragmentation and unity, extending beyond physical dimensions of space and bodily matter and into the complex recesses of the mind.

The psychic interplay between the mind, the body and desire has been an avenue for investigation since Arellano stud-

ADDITIONAL IMAGES COURTESY OF AGNES ARELLANO.

GIVING BIRTH TO CREATIVITY. Agnes Arellano in her garden with *Haliya Bathing*. (OPPOSITE PAGE *Carcass-Cornucopia*, 1987, 182.8 x 130 x 80 cm, cold-cast marble, unhulled rice metal hooks, abaca rope

WOMEN BUDDHAS.
(ABOVE) *Eshu*, 1997, cold-cast marble, volcanic cinder. (BELOW) *Three Buddha Mothers*. (Left to right) *Vesta*, 1996, cold-cast marble; *Dea*, 1996, cold-cast marble; *Lola*, 1996, cold-cast marble. (OPPOSITE PAGE) *Tender Moment*, cold-cast marble, dried flowers.

ied psychology at the University of the Philippines, later enrolling as a graduate student in Clinical Psychology at Ateneo de Manila University. Having been raised steeped in the church, even starting a choir with her sister at their local parish and taking collections at mass, Arellano eagerly delved into her neurosis, what she referred to as her adult rebellion against the church and a period of not knowing what she wanted to do with her life. Initially following the path of her sister, a famous psychologist, Arellano found that school offered little to quell the angst of her oppressive Catholic upbringing and its unfavorable view on sex.

This exploration had taken her out of Manila, veering off the beaten path with a detour in psychadelia and New Age philosophies. "I lost the MA in Psychology but I got a self-conferred PhD in psychedelics," Arellano jokes. "Art was not yet there, just sunsets, magic and music. Not knowing what you want to do in college is such a crossroads, isn't it?" Influenced by philosophical writings such as Bardo Thödol's *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and the theories of prominent psychoanalysts Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, Arellano sought spiritual refuge in the recreational use of entheogens, or psychoactive substances intended for finding "the God within".

"Having all these constructs, you could then navigate your own mind. You literally blow your mind and you explore your insanity and you accept different states of being, all the dimensions," Arellano confers, chuckling at the memory of getting an A+ grade on a final exam at Ateneo while high on mescaline.

It was during this time, having been given a second chance by her architect father to pursue study in the arts, that Arellano left the drug scene and embarked on a spiritual pilgrimage across the sprawling plazas, gothic cathedrals, and religious shrines of Western Europe. "Fear of God and fear of the serpent of sex were replaced by a search for an alternative deity—one more forgiving and benevolent," Arellano recalls.

Though travel was banned under Marcos's reign, religious pilgrimages were permitted during the Holy Roman Catholic Year and Arellano jumped at the opportunity.

From Michelangelo's glorious Renaissance paintings in Italy, Van Gogh in Amsterdam, to the stunning spiritual relics and monuments of Paris, Arellano immersed herself in European art and culture. She stayed on in Paris, earning a "Cours de langue et civilisation françaises (degré supérieure)" at the Sorbonne,

"Through art I'm able to say in visual terms whatever I went through—the horror, romance, trauma, or confusion, all that without which I'd go crazy. Well, you have to know that you're crazy to transcend that."

– Agnes Arellano

until an unfathomable tragedy struck at home when Arellano was in Spain.

"I was still traipsing about when in 1981, my parents and my sister died in a fire. I was on a beautiful island, and I could hear the surf in the distance, smell the rosemary from the night before. Then there was a baby crying in the other cottage. It was life and death juxtaposed, an explosion. So that became a frequent theme, this juxtaposition of opposites," Arellano says.

Arellano tried to make sense of her grief and personal history by using the human body as an expression of dualities and cycles: life and death, creation and destruction, rebellion and acquiescence, science and mythology. "With *Temple to the Moon Goddess*, I was investigating cycles so I went on this trail of the feminine principle in religion, studying all the ancient stuff. Myths are there from ancient times before science took over and said this is happening to you. The myth would tell you that the goddess came down periodically from the sacred spring, which is like menstruation."

In 1983, under the mentorship of artist Roberto Chabet, a key figure in the Philippine avant-garde art movement that began in the1960s, Arellano participated in the group show *Six Artists* at the Museum of Philippine Art. *Temple to the Moon Goddess* consisted of 24 sculptural pieces symbolizing Arellano's personal desire for fertility and honoring the sacred feminine: Haliya, Goddess of the Moon in Bicol myth; Isis, Egyptian wife of Osiris and mother of Horus; Artemis of the Ephesians; the Roman goddesses Athene, Aphrodite and Cybele.

Arellano sought to uplift the female body as an altar of worship, drawing from various indigenous myths and religions that portray the female archetype as a source of ethereal power. "It was good to lift the veils that Catholicism had used to obscure our vision and see the underlying beliefs that sustained our people before we were all named Juan and Maria, to discover for myself that the reason that the cult of the Virgin Mary is so strong here is that we never really severed those ties with the babaylans and

shamans now hidden in syncretic cults like those in Mount Banahaw."

Over a career that has spanned three decades, what Arellano is most known for are her incredible live-casted sculptures, beginning with plaster casts of her own body in addition to those of her friends and loved ones, which are transformed into elegiac monuments that revel in sensuality and the immortalization of the flesh. It is a rigorous process often accompanied by a team of two or three people that would lay the plaster on Arellano's or other models' bodies, split the plaster mold into several pieces, reassemble and outfit them with an armature to create a negative mold, before casting the positive of the plaster and adding the finishing touches, such as chiseling and sanding. What Arellano liked most about life casting was that it was an exact photocopy of a person's body.

When Arellano and her ex-husband founded Pinaglabanan Galleries, built over the remains of her ancestral house in San Juan del Monte that went asunder during the fire, Arellano erected *Bosch and the Hollow Men* in 1986. It was a large-scale installation, her rendition of Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, a surreal paradise triptych featuring Adam and Eve and a bevy of nude figures inflicting corporeal punishment. In Arellano's version, the figures are shown in various states of play and idol worship: some figures are bent over in supplication, a few are masturbating or have tulips sprouting from their buttocks, three water maidens with grotesque facial features emerge from a lake, while a chimpanzee stares blankly at a television set watching news about fraudulent elections. It is Arellano's interpretation of the events leading up to the 1986 EDSA Revolution, as the voyeuristic eyes of Filipino art guru and philosopher Pepito Bosch examine the unfolding spectacle and several figures offer *balimbing* ("five-sided star fruit"), a term commonly used at the time to describe fickleness in Philippine politics.

"Everybody was life cast. The guy masturbating actually had a hard-on from the plaster getting hot. He said, 'Oooh nice,' then, 'I need to pee.' I said to him, 'Well, you'll just have to pee sitting down. *Magkakrack eh.*' ('It will crack.')," Arellano humorously recalls.

Her other notable works include *Recumbent YabYum Sarcophagus*, a tribute to her late parents whose charred bodies were found in a state of embrace. Arellano and her ex-husband were cast in the reverse missionary sexual position, the final plaster cast set atop a tomb filled with skeleton bones. She held a ritual over the bones, offering objects such as jewelry and sprinkling ceremonial powders over the dead, depicting how "In life as in death their love lives on."

Arellano's *Army of Dicks* are composed of seven phallic figures identical on one side and embellished with different "faces" on the backside, some with either clitoral or vaginal features. All except two were burned down in a second fire that consumed most of Arellano's life's work. "If you asked me to have a retrospective, I can't because my pieces burned down. It's like, again? Again? First my parents, then my art. All the art I ever owned. Does it come three times? Ah, scary. So later I had a candle exhibition where the whole theme was conflagration. You turn into millions of little flames that you can

SCALING DOWN.
(ABOVE) Arellano has shifted from life casting to doing smaller sculptures.
(BELOW) *Sleeping Goddess.*

contain and that can help instead of destroy. So I think that I got rid of that inner cursed feeling [through art]," Arellano says.

Luckily, what many consider as her magnum opus did not burst into flames. *Carcass-Cornucopia* is part of an Inscape integrated with *Music for Making the Sun Rise*, a musical composition inspired by the myth of Orpheus, with thirty-nine human skulls in a Zen garden sandbox representing sheet music. *Carcass-Cornucopia* reflects Arellano's experience of having a caesarian, being split open like a piece of meat, directly referring to the Indo-Aryan myth of creation when the universe is created by the explosion of the first bovine. The sculpture was derived from Arellano's body, which was literally hung upside down during life casting. It is shown with its torso exposed to reveal the baby inside, a symbolic *bulol* (rice god) taken from Ifugao mythology. The umbilical cord extends to the floor, where rice grains are scattered from the cornucopia of the mother's body to fertilize the earth. "I changed the feet to carabao hooves and used slaughterhouse hooks to emphasize the meat. The inside is exploding because out of that comes music, new

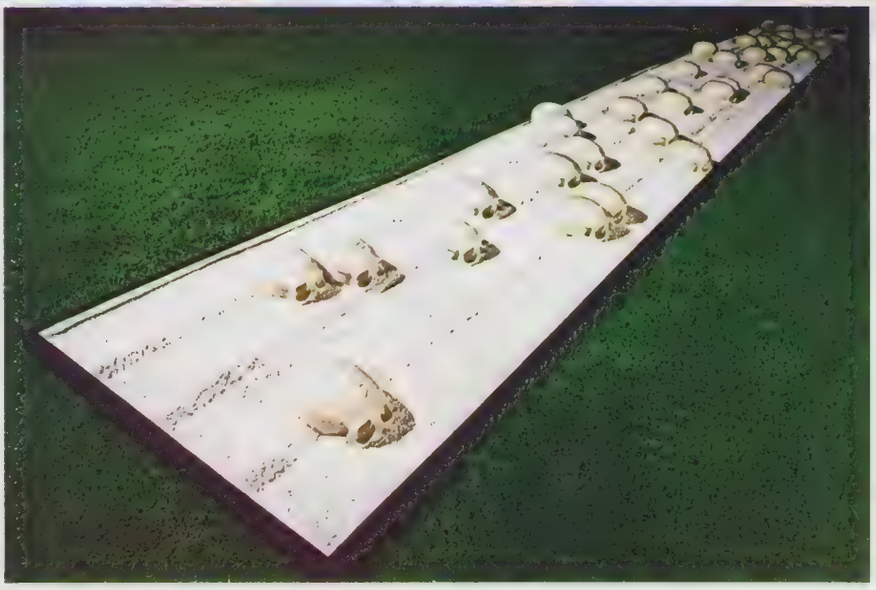
creation," explains Arellano. "*May* spirit *talaga nagrereside.*" ("There is really a spirit that resides there.")

At her home in Blue Ridge, Quezon City, past Arellano's altar adorned with photos, prayer mantras, and items collected from her travels, a sliding door opens to a lush courtyard where a sculpture of Haliya, the Bicol Moon Goddess, inclines atop a pool of sand. It is here, as chimes tinkle with the Sunday afternoon breeze, where Arellano relaxes with her partner, artist Billy Bonnevie, who has a penchant for coloring her stories with humorous panache. A gravel pathway extends from a curved arch in the back of the property, leading to Arellano's workshop and studio, where she is currently creating new work. Since falling ill with liver disease several years ago, Arellano had given up life casting because of its tedious nature and the scale involved, opting instead to do smaller sculptures made of clay. "It's a big shift for me because you need so many [pieces] to get the same expression that you would get from life-sized figures. Suddenly your notion of space becomes micro," says Arellano.

Arellano's eventual research trips to Malta, Bhutan, and India, where she and Bonnevie explored the Khajuraho Group of Monuments, famous for their medieval Hindu and Jain temples that feature erotic sandstone figures, are the inspiration behind her new works called "Upsaras" ("sky maidens"), smaller-scale cold cast marble sculptures of the female nude.

If sculpture—as an expression of the multiple cycles in Arellano's life—had any inclination toward neuroses, it would capture the artist's thinking, feeling, sensing and intuition, what Jung referred to as an individual's inferior psychological functions. But nothing is inferior about Arellano's works and the life forces she breathes into it. "Through art I'm able to say in visual terms whatever I went through—the horror, romance, trauma, or confusion, all that without which I'd go crazy. Well, you have to know that you're crazy to transcend that," says Arellano.

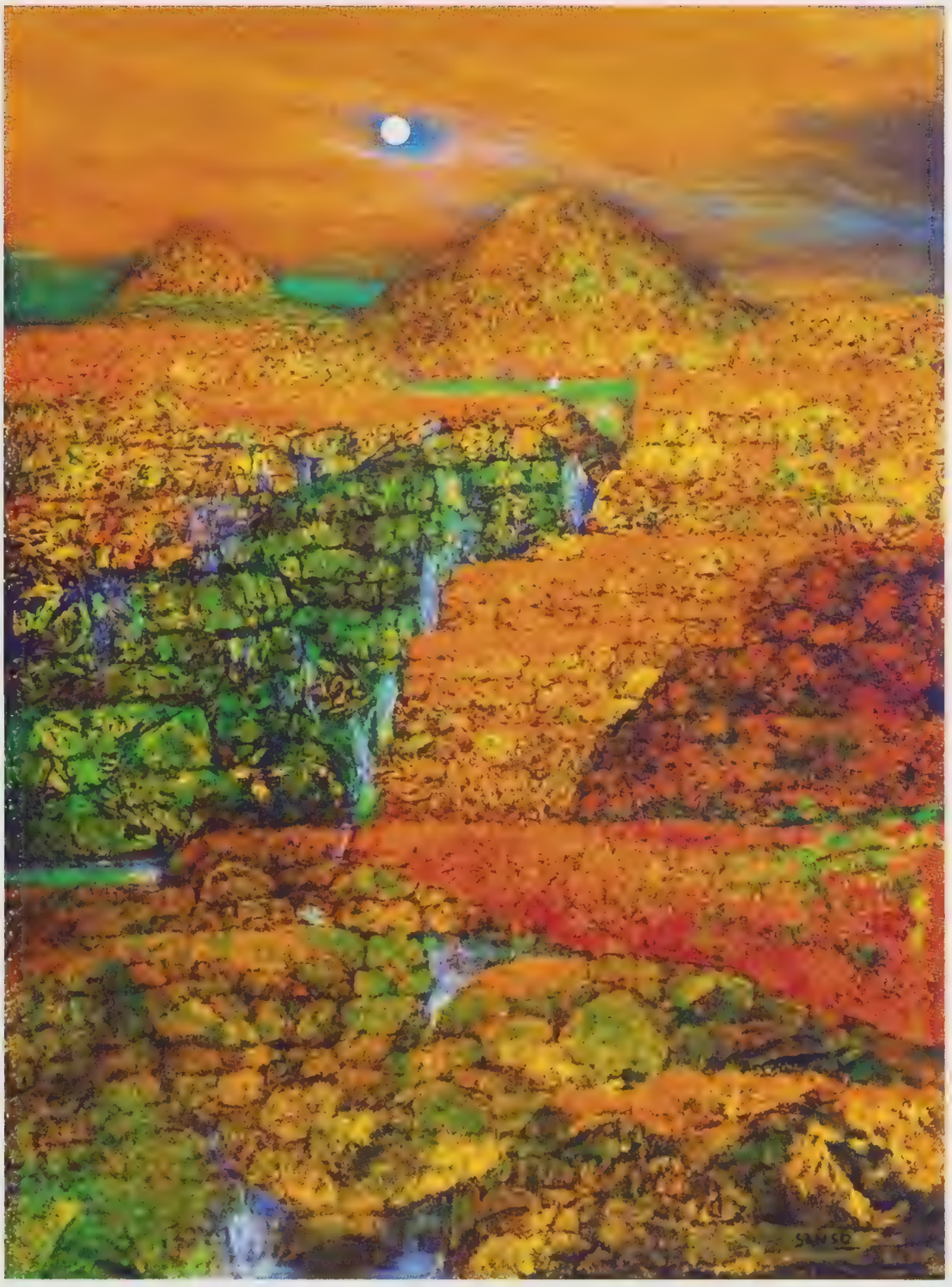
GARDEN OF LIFE AND DEATH,



How the artistic treasures of Nestor and Adelaida Gaddi inspire a community.

Art in ordinary spaces

TEXT BY REUBEN RAMAS CAÑETE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ABBY FRIAS



SPRING AWAKENING. Juvenal Sanso's *Essence of Spring*, 28.5 x 21 inches, acrylic on canvas.

Serendipity can play a powerful role in building an art collection. For entrepreneur Nestor Gaddi and his lovely wife, Adelaida "Adel" Yanga Gaddi (a pulmonary doctor based at St. Luke's Medical Center in Quezon City), it was relaxing in the mall and looking forward to seeing a movie after a hard day's work. The day before typhoon Ondoy struck Manila on September 26, 2009, the Gaddis were walking inside SM Megamall when they spotted the art gallery strip known as the Art Walk. Display windows containing Philippine art filled the Gaddis with a pleasure that they had never experienced before. Admiring paintings by Lydia Velasco, Tam Austria and the sculptures of Seb Chua, they felt an epiphany. They snapped up their first Philippine artworks, and nine months later had amassed an unprecedented contemporary art collection of roughly 130 artworks that are now distributed between their house in Quezon City and their respective offices.

CHARACTER STUDY.
(LEFT TO RIGHT) Jose Joya's *Mother and Child*, 1990, 19.75 x 12.75 inches, pastel on paper; A painting by Federico Aguilar Alcuaz. (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM) Cesar Legaspi's *Guitar Man*, 1976, 17.5 x 24.5 inches, charcoal on paper; BenCab's *The Omen*, 1991, 17 x 12 inches, ink on paper.

The Gaddis parlayed their financial success into a glittering trove of artistic treasures. The art they collect sustains their lives, as well others', through the emotions, lessons and insights that art provides. The Gaddis did not achieve success and artistic sensibility overnight. Nestor and Adel, who hail from middle-class families, received degrees in Mechanical Engineering from UP Diliman and an MD from the University of Santo Tomas, respectively. Both came from the same hometown of Isabela in Santiago City (8 hours northeast of Manila) and were high school sweethearts who got married in 1996.

Nestor led an adventurous life that any Filipino living in the early '80s would have needed to survive economic and political crises under Ferdinand Marcos. Taking up a programming course at Ateneo Business School, he served as a pioneering programmer for companies like Philips before moving to the United States in 1983 to work as a freelance software consultant. While there, he worked for the team of Armand Hammer, the famed chairman of Occidental Petroleum, to organize Hammer's personal files and catalogue his legendary art collection. Hammer's key role as a backdoor channel between the White House and The Kremlin (the former government of the Soviet Union) during the Cold War coincided with his role as an important connoisseur and art collector. His biggest contribution to art was facilitating the sale of choice pieces from the Hermitage Museum to banker Paul Mellon in the 1930s, which would eventually become the core collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. It is inspiring that a Filipino had become a close confidant to this successful mogul and helped to manage his collection, which is now on permanent loan to UCLA.

The Martin Lawrence Art Galleries, one of Nestor's corporate clients in the '80s, was another inspiration. Walking through the long corridor filled with original works by Marc Chagall and Pablo Picasso remains Nestor's most vivid experience in art. It was there where he witnessed Los Angeles-based contemporary artists like Hiro Yamagata arrive in Ferrari Testarossas, sign their colored limited serigraph editions and leave with

fat paychecks. He was with a glum Martin Lawrence when the stock market crashed in 1987, decreasing its stock price, until Andy Warhol (Lawrence had a vast collection of his works) died, sending their shares soaring beyond the roof.

Through his experience with the gallery, Nestor began collecting art at his Los Angeles home, though the only things he could afford, he admitted meekly, were serigraphs of international artists like Susan Rios, Hiro Yamagata, Anatole Krasnyansky, Itzchak Tarkay, Don Hatfield, Linda le Kniff and Lucelle Raad. During rest days, Nestor would make it a habit to put a chair in front of his favorite artwork and gaze at it raptly for insight in life.

But the corporate grind would eventually wear down even the most detached consultant. Nestor returned to the Philippines in 2002 to live with Adel and their four handsome boys. Nestor decided to establish his business interests in the Philippines. First he worked for Petron, later switching to Total to become its first semi-autonomous franchisee. Establishing a company named Petrolier Corporation, Nestor capitalized and managed four of Total's gas stations along the Maharlika Highway between San Miguel, Bulacan and Santiago City selling not only Total's petroleum products, but also his own non-oil products, which he branded as "Gaddi Oil". He cultivated a sophisticated approach of service in his gas stations, which became total-service community centers for people on the go who wanted a different experience from an ordinary "fill-'er-up-and-eat" stop.

Using Sir Richard Branson's style of management as his model, Nestor Gaddi looked at service stations as community centers where people could communicate, sit back and relax, and get to know one another. In particular, Nestor followed Branson's three central ideas: make things better, the customer knows best and take it up to the next level. In Nestor's signature Total station in Cordon, the selling of fuel and lubricants is set up beside spaces for eating and resting. Nestor has plans to build a hotel with verandas, a park and playground for kids, and integrate hotel services with the convenience store. There is a training center for his service employees, who can sleep in

"By placing art in ordinary spaces, the Gaddis believe that people from all walks of life can experience their own epiphanies."

subsidized dormitories during their job training.

Nestor began to share his love for art by hanging a large abstract painting by Seb Chua in his corporate office in Cordon. It became a conversation piece amongst his employees, which he hopes can impart the importance of art as part of one's growth to a more meaningful life. The vision for Nestor and Adel Gaddi's art collection is twofold. While art enlivens their working and living environments, it can also inspire the public. By placing art in ordinary spaces, the Gaddis believe that people from all walks of life can experience their own epiphanies. The strength of this dual conviction is perhaps the strongest motivation for the Gaddi's swift acquisition of a large collection of artworks.

The heart of the Gaddi collection is Lydia Velasco, whose paintings of working women can be seen throughout the entire Gaddi household, from the entrance sala to the master's bedroom. The masterworks of Juvenal Sanso occupy the foyer and main dining room, with a massive surreal landscape titled *The Outer*

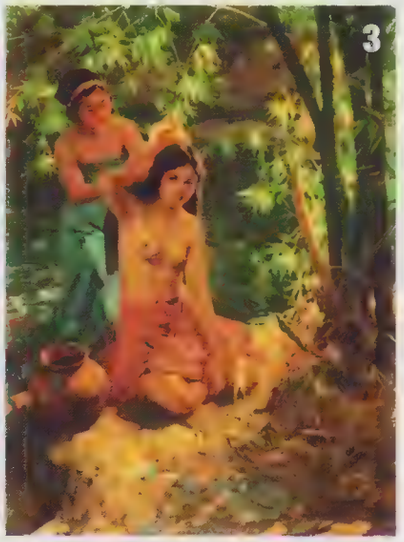
Waters and small, rare works from the late-1950s—ones that Sanso never sells nowadays. The living room and entrance sala also contain other masterworks of modern Philippine art, particularly a 1979 Onib Olmedo portrait of a man entitled *A Solitary Life*, which Nestor likens to his own American experience. This is surrounded by works by National Artists, such as Cesar Legaspi, Federico Aguilar Alcuaz, Jose Joya, Napoleon Abueva, Benedicto "BenCab" Cabrera and Abdulmari Imao, in addition to senior artists Malang Santos, Mario Parial and Ramon Orlina. Young Filipino contemporary artists are also well-represented in the Gaddi household, extending from the basement to the bedrooms. Aside from Seb Chua, the Gaddis own works by Juan Sajid Imao, Carlo Magno, Marcel Antonio, Jerry Morada, Juanito Torres and Vincent de Pio. Betsy Westendorf's *Barong Barong* reminds Nestor of fond memories with his father.

As young but avid collectors, the Gaddis have specific ideas about their preferences. They prefer the simplicity of figurative works that are easily relatable. They are drawn to human figures whose stories in paint need only be unravelled by the act of looking and decoding. Beauty is also an important standard—they gravitate toward the sensuality of line, color and composition of a human body, a landscape or a still life. More importantly, the vivaciousness of a life lived to the fullest is also a crucial hallmark. Abstract works like that of Alcuaz or Orlina have become part of their concern, since these works suggest a daring use of line or color and a harmonious unity that characterizes Asian Modernism.

Part of the Gaddi's long-term plan is to eventually build an art museum in Cordon for their collection, so they can share it with the community that has nourished them. In this way, the Gaddis hope to establish a trend in art collecting that elevates the experience of art beyond a narrow confine, so that anyone in the community can partake of such a rich and liberating experience.

FLOWER POWER. (TOP TO BOTTOM) Marcel Antonio's *Kathy's Rainbow*, 2001, 30 x 24 inches, oil/alkyd on canvas; Eufemio Rasco IV's *Ecstacy (Washed)*, 2010, 48 x 60 inches, oil on canvas. (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM) Mario Parial's *At the Flower Garden I*, 2007, 36 x 32 inches, acrylic on canvas; Norma Belleza's *Tres Marias*, 2009, 24 x 30 inches, oil on canvas.

1 Ronald Ventura's *Rebel's Optic*, 213 x 152.5 cm, oil on canvas, HKD 1,580,000. **2** Vicente Manansala's *Man, Girl and Cock*, 61 x 46 cm, oil on masonite board, HKD 500,000. **3** Fernando Amorsolo's *Grooming Princess Urduja*, 66 x 49 cm, oil on canvas, HKD 475,000. **4** Vicente Manansala's *White Birds (Dark Shadows)*, 120 x 59 cm, acrylic on paper, HKD 237,500. **5** Geraldine Javier's *The Guardian*, 218.5 x 152.5 cm, oil on canvas, framed embroidery with preserved insects, HKD 225,000. **6** Yasmin Sison's *The Owl and the Pussycat*, 200.5 x 150 cm, oil on canvas, HKD 150,000. **7** Kiko Escora's *Untitled*, 153 x 115 cm, charcoal on paper, HKD 112,500. **8** Nikki Luna's *Unmentionables*, 38.5 x 44 x 10 cm, light box, lace, plastic resin, HKD 93,750. **9** Antonio Blanco's *Balinese Dancer*, 53 x 53 cm, watercolor and gouache on paper, HKD 87,500. **10** Kiko Escora's *Untitled*, 152.5 x 125 cm, oil on canvas, HKD 81,250 .



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Modern and Contemporary Southeast Asian Paintings
Spring Sale, April 5, 2010
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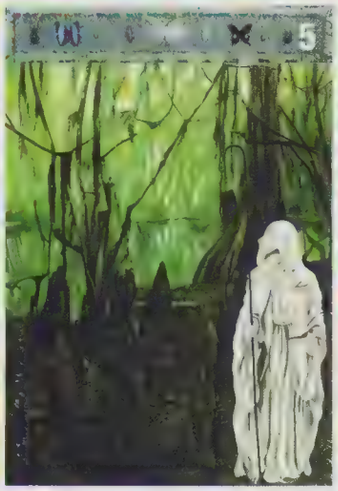
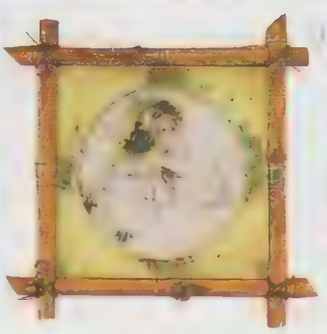


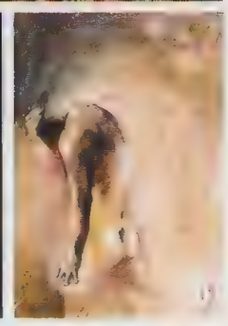


IMAGES COURTESY OF SOTHEBY'S

Borobudur

Asian Contemporary and Modern Art + Fine Jewellery May 16, 2010, Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel, Singapore.

1 Geraldine Javier's *Mother or Child*, 183 x 122 cm, oil on canvas, hand embroidered canvas with beeswax on metallic tray, SGD 31,720. **2** Joel "Welbart" Bartolome's *Third Quarter Moon*, 183 x 244 cm, oil on canvas, SGD 31,720. **3** Federico Aguilar Alcuaz's *Still Life & Landscape*, 53 x 73 cm, oil on canvas, SGD 24,400. **4** Lydia Velasco's *Untitled*, 122 x 122 cm, oil on canvas, SGD 24,400. **5** Rodel Tapaya's *How Fire Came to Man*, 180 x 228 cm (diptych), acrylic on canvas, SGD 23,180. **6** Joel "Welbart" Bartolome's *Closing Time*, 140 x 181 cm, oil on canvas, SGD 14,640. **7** Annie Cabigting's *Destroyed Painting II, After Francis Bacon*, 153 x 135 cm, oil on canvas, SGD 13,420. **8** Ronald Ventura's *Untitled*, 35 x 25 cm, acrylic on paper, SGD 3,660.

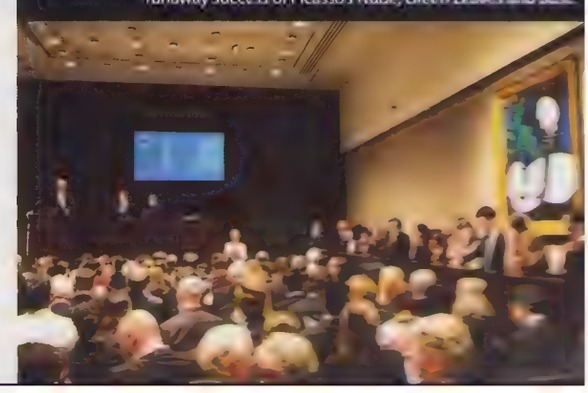


NEW WORLD RECORD

A market history was made at Christie's May 4 Impressionist and Modern Art Evening Sale in New York when Picasso's *Nude, Green Leaves and Bust* sold for $106,482,500 to an unidentified telephone bidder, setting a new world record for any work of art sold at auction.

Silence fell over the packed saleroom as Christie's lead auctioneer, Christopher Burge, conducted nine minutes of bidding that involved eight clients. Burge took bids from a client in the saleroom as well as those on the phone before the competition settled down to two bidders at the $88 million mark and a one-on-one battle ensued. The final bid was hammered down at 7:32 p.m. at $95 million. Buyers' premium takes the price of the painting to a record breaking $106.5 million.

Nude, Green Leaves and Bust is the star of Mrs. Sidney Brody's collection, a stellar assemblage of modern art purchased primarily in the 1940s and 1950s and kept in the family home since. Known among experts as the "lost" 1932 masterpiece because it had never before been published in color, it is a sensuous depiction of Picasso's muse and mistress, Marie-Therese Walter. In previous years, Christie's has successfully sold six paintings from Picasso's celebrated 1932 series. As befitting its importance within the canon of Picasso's work, the $70 to 90 million pre-sale estimate was the highest placed yet on an artwork offered at Christie's New York. The previous highest price for a work at auction was $104,327,006 paid for *L'homme qui marche I*, bronze, 1960, by Alberto Giacometti on February 3, 2010.



BIDDING FRENZY. The evening sale was highlighted by the runaway success of Picasso's *Nude, Green Leaves and Bust*.

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On Track

The past year was important for the Philippine Art Awards. Apart from pursuing its program of a national competition for the visual arts, with four regional platforms leading to an omnibus exhibition at the National Museum, it widened its vision in nurturing artists and the possibilities for their art. Toward this end, it offered workshops on contemporary art all over the archipelago and broadened the media for the competition to include techniques beyond wall-bound expectations and anticipate sculptural, installative, or hypermediated expression.

All this looks to the future: for the art scene that has to continually replenish talent, for the talent who must ceaselessly reinvent form, for form that needs to be reconceived time and again so that it could respond to the current processes of making the world and the consequences of a re-enchantment.

The Philippine Art Awards has tilled the ground and sown the seed, and it is only but a matter of time that it should reap the gains of the effort to let art flourish at a time of ravenous consumption. In the meantime, certain tendencies have surfaced.

First, the notion of a current national art or a Philippine contemporary art is being rendered dense not only by a sense of place across a teeming country, but by varied sensibilities from diverse expressions of the local, which may be found in the city, island, province, cyberspace. Only the Sungdu-an of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the Philippine Art Awards have sustained a viable national art exhibition project that has adequately invested in both curation and criticism and have patiently and diligently engaged the fraught category of "nation" and perhaps the afterlife of its oftentimes belabored "identity."

Second, standards of quality are being refined according to both the demands of context and the aspirations to complexity in discourse and technology. While the figurative is still the preferred mode of depiction, the "real" has been substantially reworked within conceptualism, digital media, a return to abstraction, and most of all, a concern for greater interpretive performance through the codes of and references to a gamut of sources: folklore, subculture, everyday news, art history, politics, and the density and sometimes the luminosity of the "real."

Third, social and aesthetic positions are cutting a sharper stance, specifically in relation to the defilement of both nature and person in our time and how the human agent is seen as complicit in its perpetuation and deliverance, how the social person, and therefore society in its most ample and intimate reckoning, becomes deeply involved in the experience of a decline of values, and hence, of the "political."

All this offers a critique of the mystification of images through a media that has purveyed icons and symbols that have feasted on false hopes and fears and sometimes corpses. It is but unfortunate that the reality of redemption has been so warped by prospects of change we can never believe yet persist to thrill. Never, because they have betrayed so many already, from the vast plantations of landless peasants to the sad streets of an expectant throng snaking into the memory of so-called revolt.

Curated by
PATRICK D. FLORES AND CID REYES
On behalf of the Philippine Art Awards 2009-2010 Panels of Judges

Split screen, as it were: upper part, a flooded street lined by second-hand antique shops. Lower half: a superheroine, recumbent odalisque, cloaked in the wares of the stores above, acting like a magnet drawing in all the merchandise. Between the two realms is a gap that is the artist's discourse on Bangkal, a neighborhood in the posh side of Makati, hemmed in by businesses thriving on surplus and hand-me-downs of the elite, swamped with ties to property and expenditure.

Thomas Daquioag's *Magnet*
185 x 198 cm. Oil on canvas.

METRO MANILA

Froilan Calayag's *The Mother's Revenge (After Rizal)*
123 x 184 cm. Oil on canvas.

A take on Jose Rizal's terracotta sculpture titled Mother's Revenge, done in exile in Dapitan, depicting how a dog rushes to the succor of an offspring devoured by a crocodile. It keeps the allegorical spirit of the inspiration and reflects on love, courage, and heroism. Wondrously painted in the antique mode, with fine brushwork and painstaking glazing, but nevertheless intimating a sensibility that is contemporary, with the synthetic texture of the fauna manifesting markedly as if coming out of anime or a graphic novel.

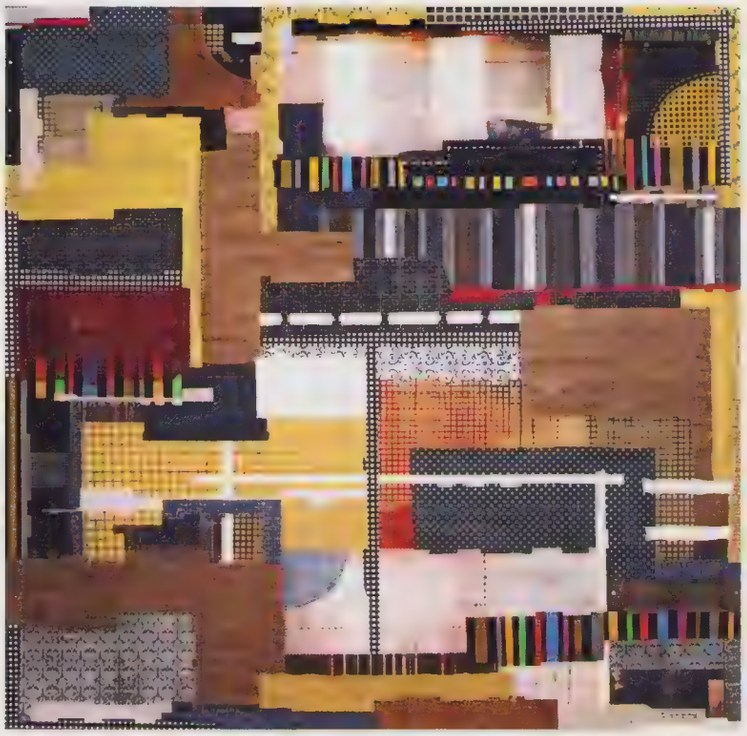
Storm and Stress

The artists of the city, reeling from a deluge of unprecedented magnitude in recent time, reflect on two moments that compel them to make art: catastrophe and whimsy. We glean in many of these works scenes of the fall and failure: nature unleashing its wrath, the apocalypse heralding fear and trembling, a holocaust of the soul and body tearing humanity asunder. But on the other hand, amid suffering and disrepair, there is that moment of wonder and possibility, from the artist's sheer skill with ink or pixel or paint.

Many of these works seem to be rooted in a social biography shaped by a discerning engagement with the environment, personal history, and even lofty aspirations to philosophy, spiritual thought, and theory of art. But all this is distilled in forms that are idiosyncratic, pursued with a vision that mediates with circumspection irresistible influences and tenacious inspirations.

What we gather here are not spectacles that compete with the vulgar mystifications of so-called champions of democracy, but quiet reflections on art and milieu, preponderant nature and finite personhood, works carried out with a heady mix of wit and grim, a sense of adventure and destiny and, always, the chance of not making it.

– Patrick D. Flores



Patterns culled from textile or wall papers, stitched together to form a fabric of textures and shapes and inevitably of an object that is tromp l'oeil: a semblance of quilt or patchwork in acrylic at a certain level and a wonderful piece of abstraction at another. Pretty and formalist at first glance, but finally unravels with discipline, control, and finesse. Quite startling for a depiction of a brothel.

Maximo Balatbat II's *Avenida Karnabal*
183 x 183 cm, Acrylic on canvas.

A scene of suffering, ashen, leaden, very gray. A woman, mother of an artist and wife of a tricycle driver and baker, convulses, her fevered flesh ready to give up. The household is witness to this pain, and the work, in a way, paints a paean to the hope that this too will pass, through a slit of light that poignantly redeems a surface of travails. It is a meditative work that is ultimately visceral.

Raffy T. Napay's *Ang Liwanag at Ang Pakikipaglaban*
200 x 200 cm, Acrylic on canvas

LUZON

The Evil That Men Do

In the aftermath of the terrible typhoons that wrecked havoc on Luzon, resulting in the horrifying devastation of land, property and lives, artists expectedly found themselves in serious rumination: how in the face of tremendous anxieties can art be the redemption of a life that has morphed into a surreal nightmare. The evil that men do to human relationships and nature, to spirituality and sensibility, has become a self-perpetuating cycle of grief and sorrow visited upon our lives. Thus, the canvases that confront the artists from Luzon are fraught with images and themes that crush the human spirit. The prospect of a watery grave has stunned us all to speechlessness.

Each canvas, then, is a meditation on the decay and death of our values, as man is held in opposition against his religion, spiritual belief, environment. It is all he can do to stem the tide of despair and helplessness.

What finally redeem the Luzon artists are the depth of introspection—and respect—they have accorded their subject, the stateliness of craftsmanship, luminousness of their imaginative wanderings, and the valor of spirit to confront all the dark forces that weigh down as heavily on them as did the tempest of nature that once brought them to their knees.

– Cid Reyes

Of clothing, Henry David Thoreau observed, "It is an interesting question how far men would retain their relative rank if they were divested of their clothes." Even the great mathematician Albert Einstein was moved to declare: "If most of us are ashamed of shabby clothes...let us be more ashamed of shabby ideas and shoddy philosophies. It would be a sad situation if the wrapper was better than the meat wrapped around it."

As the Philippines' national attire, the Barong Tagalog is rich not only in patriotic significance but in the resonance of its historical origins. Paramount are the attire's dual characteristics: it must be worn untucked and must be made from transparent material, both strictures imposed by Spanish colonial rule. The first as a sign of the indios' servility, and the second, to ensure that Filipinos were not hiding anything, in particular, deadly weapons.

Indeed, it is the refined transparency of the fabric which Padilla uses as a counterpoint to the coarse, grasping, and porcine figure that dominates his canvas. The rich embroidery of the Barong Tagalog lays bare the vulgarity and corruption that have become the endemic qualities of public figures that command the destiny of our country. Recall the words of John Rushkin: "As long as there are cold and nakedness in the land around you, so long can there be no question at all but that splendor of dress is a crime."

Vincent Paul L. Padilla's
See Through the Barong Tagalog
183 x 152 cm, Oil on canvas.

All too rarely does one encounter an artwork that stops one in his tracks, gripped by its mesmeric power. One such work is Augusto E. Elopre's The End of the Black In-hear-itance. Whence such hypnotic appeal, at once puzzling and enthralling, unnerving and mystifying? This is art-making that is the equivalent of a virtuosic star turn.

Suffice it to say that the felicitous combination of subject (drawn from the dark lore of nativist beliefs, rife with evil and tribulations) and unexpected material (chicken feathers) is potent. As befits a narrative, Elopre has segmented the pictorial space into sections that highlight specific dramatic scenes. The central passage is dominated by an old, ailing woman possessing an evil power which her children refuse to inherit, thus condemning her to a death of terrible pain and suffering. Elopre's masterly manipulation of feathers, collaged with extreme finesse, is guaranteed to elicit critical bravos.

Augusto E. Elorpe's *The End of the Black In-Hear-Itance*
199.5 x 184 cm, Hand compressed feathers on canvas.

The alarming bruises on their stark, naked bodies are not the marks of wedded bliss, but the blows and bites of an errant love. Man and woman face an unseen personage—a judge? a minister? a priest?—in a manner of pose that is a bitter ironic comment to a betrothed couple. The very format of a "diptych" dividing them is the formal dichotomy of a disintegrated relationship. By turns comic and serious, realistic and allegorical, this painting is a virtual exegesis of domestic violence. Witness, then, woman recast as a martyr—notice the wire halo of a saint attached to her—and philandering man, now-cuckolded, riddled with hickeys but upon whose head a seminal fluid drips, a lewd allusion to a native expression. Both guilty of an errant lust. Or so, the artist would have us believe. Indeed, this speechless narration was inspired by the all-too-frequent news Cerda has culled from the steamy tabloids.

Rodelio "Toti" Cerda's *Broken Vows*
195 x 156 cm, Acrylic on canvas.

Cezar L. Arro's *Deception*
200 x 148 cm, Oil on canvas.

A face, clasped hands, and torso are tattooed with a swarm of images, conjuring a translucent mask that is a guise, failing to find identity and seemingly averse to a singular presence. It becomes apparent that the details allude to the icons of religion that radiate against the bleakness of earthly vices and miseries. The figure cuts a gesture of prayer, perhaps a plea for the end of dissembling.

Loss of Myth

The artists of the Visayas express a distrust for appearances, or more to the point, for mystifications spun by the media, government, the elite, commerce, and those who rule and, at the same time, proclaim change for those they have corrupted. Such hypocrisy is not lost on the artists who try to redeem the potential of their culture through the critique of the image. One may ask: Who is more corrupt, the traditional politician or the media mogul? The plunderer or the vulgar star who purveys nightly gossip? The murderer or the vulture who feasts on the myth of the dead that has become some sort of an icon-merchandise?

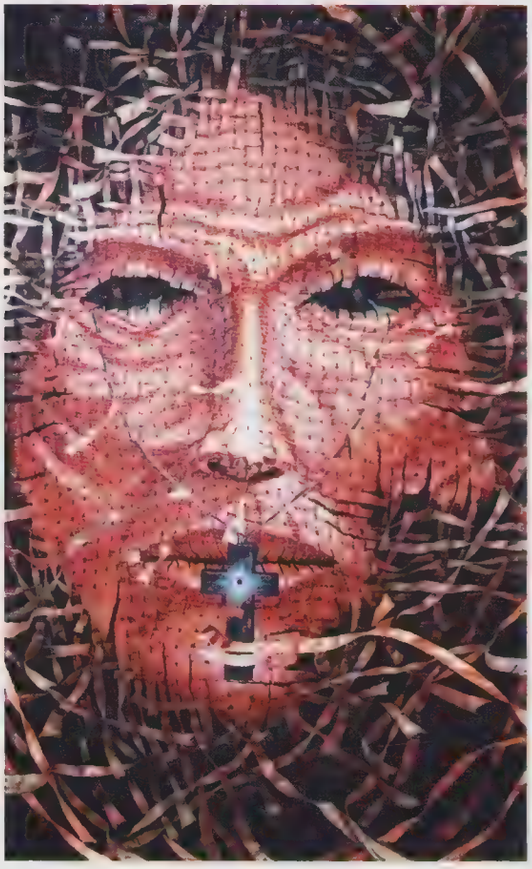
This is why a strong sense of commentary on the ethos and morality of the day arises from their works. They speak of an earth being depleted, a nation being corroded, and even the self worn down irrevocably by vice and greed. The titles of their works betray their sentiment against the hypocrisy of messiahs: twisted, deception, stapled. Nonetheless, they still aspire to renewal: *Connected, The Filipino Art of Problem-Solving, Balik-Loob,* or homing in on the heart.

Without doubt, the artists stand their ground, devoted to their craft, fascinated with the gesture of portraying reality no matter how fraught it has become. They keep at it because they probably know in their hearts of hearts that it is only through their vision that they could take part in rendering more truthful semblances of their values. Thus, we see art that is deliberate, socially positioned, and willing to confront the dilemmas of the time.

– Patrick Flores

Seized by the Hiligaynon term for enchantment, the work is at once an admonition and an invitation. We are led to a nether world of elementals, but we are also asked not to encroach on it. To upset this realm is to court cataclysm, to stir up the wrath of spirits. A display of consistent skill in drawing rounds out this work with flourish, robust with carefully delineated figures, achieving a significant level of caliber.

Jzy Tilos's *Mari-it*
165 x 195 cm, Acrylic on canvas.



Fibers of a mat poignantly fray and fritter away to unravel a face. From the hollow eyes hang a crucifix, with the eye of omniscience at its heart. It is a visage woven and is in the process of being undone. It is an allegory of a person's faith challenged by worldliness. In the end, however, those who stray find a way to come back, to regain belief. Beautifully painted with the devotion of an artisan and the vision of a convert.

Jovito D. Hecita Jr.'s *Balik-Loob*
141 x 84 cm, Acrylic on canvas.

Return and Leaving

Scenes of fragmentation; scenes of wholeness. Passages of things breaking away; passages of remnants being gathered. In many of the works of artists from Mindanao, we glean a poignant reflection on the tension between a nature of grace and a humanity of conceit. Such unease creates certain conditions of ruin to thrive: war, calamity, even mass migration, all of which threatens both nature and humanity.

This marked impression of a skeptical and speculative imagination is important for the artists and their public. The days of uncritical homage to the bounty of the earth are over. And so are those of the sweeping rebuke of dehumanization. It is high time for art from a region that has been invariably described as war-torn and promising to initiate a new discourse, one that is rooted in robust personal experience and dense social sympathy. It is only through this process that art from this locale will become truly responsive to its milieu, the aspirations of its faithful, and the memory of its ancestors.

And so, we are heartened to see how the artists have risen to the challenge: exploring idiosyncratic media like soil, fabric, and rattan; appropriating hyper- and surrealism as a vehicle of allegory; quoting from the photographic archives to structure reverie; and commenting on issues that are at once grave and intimate. All this cuts a sharp profile of art from Mindanao: lush and yet so keen on loss.

– Patrick Flores

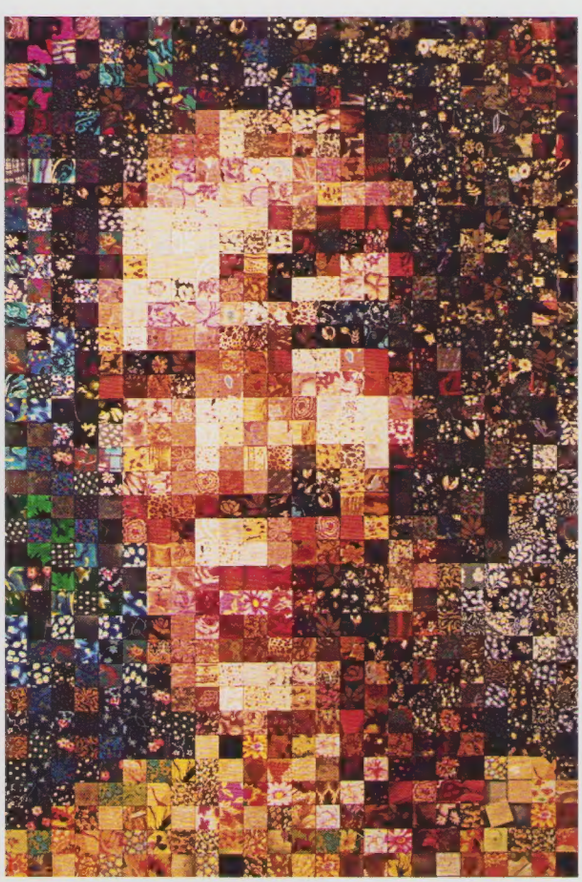
MINDANAO

We see a boy from above, standing on a map of a war-torn world, with military hardware strewn all over and defining his province. It is as if our gaze will strafe him, wrench him from his already embattled ground, and further violate his innocence. The artist links up these three interacting levels: our vision, the subject of the sight, and the locus of action. This is the theater of war that is seen through a certain perspective and a textured visual landscape of sand, gold powder, and luminous fabric. It is a mythology built up from both play and fear, with toys of violence morphing into vehicles of mass destruction. If children play with the contrivances of war, they will have waged it in real life as well.

Michael E. Bacol's *A Story for Lola Basyang*
169 x 168 cm. Mixed media.

It is not always that nature nurtures; it sometimes devours. And in our time when the hubris of technology has outstripped the potential of the earth, it has become commonplace, with torrential rains becoming more unpredictable and merciless, to the point of engulfing cities. The deluge of recent memory nuances our romantic sentiment for rain and makes us think about its fury. This work refers to such a reality, but also takes us to another dimension: a convulsed body lies on the grass, in a world shrouded in deep ominous green, its one arm nearly touching us and its head smothered by leaves, seemingly absorbed by the force around it, the numinous "green fuse" that has overcome it. It is a tale of consumption in different guises: how the world eats its own children because they are puny. That the head is missing is telling, intimating the sign of the disappeared.

Bryan H. Cabrera's *Consumed*
99 x 191 cm, Oil on canvas.



A tribute to former President Aquino consists of scraps of cloth gathered from the surplus or thrift store fondly called ukay-ukay. The floral patterns, delicately and painstakingly cut into small squares, create pixels or patches of quilt. From a distance, they would cohere into the face of Aquino, if only we would squint. But there is a cautionary tale though: at the bottom of the work is an almost negligible yet vital gap between the squares that threatens the hold of the mosaic. It is a crack on the icon's armor. Could the artist be saying that there is mystification at work in the homage, with heroism unveiled as fabricated tales spun by rulers and stitched by the elite?

Nicolas Aca Jr.'s *People's Flower*
189 x 128 cm, Mixed media.

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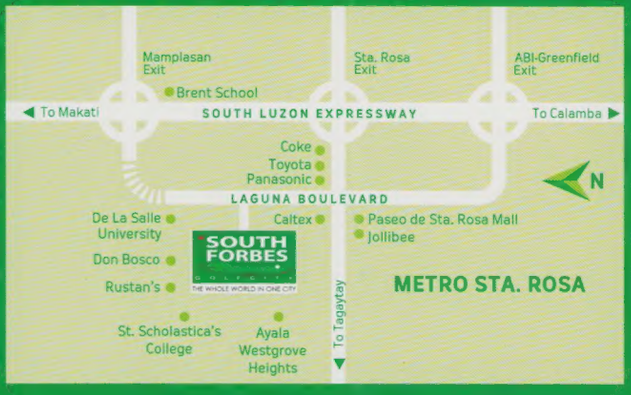

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